

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, on September 24 I urged the Prime Minister to hold a public inquiry on the incidents at Oka and Kanesatake. He said that after the crisis, and I quote the Prime Minister, the government will be more than pleased to take the kind of action suggested by the New Democratic Party Leader.

Mr. Speaker, we need a public inquiry, we need action, not just words. We need a wide-ranging public inquiry like Mr. Justice Dubin's or the Marshall inquiry in New Brunswick. Will the Prime Minister act now?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, there is a motion to refer the whole matter to a parliamentary committee, and this would be the best way for hon. members to get acquainted with this case. In my speech of September 25 I referred to a series of initiatives we were going to take in favour of native peoples. The hon. member said, and I quote:

[English]

"Many people have proposed answers to aboriginal problems."

[Translation]

The answers and the solutions I heard from the opposition and elsewhere are rather sketchy. For some time now we have been advocating more serious analyses leading to real and worthwhile solutions which will bring lasting benefits to the native people of Canada. Never did I suggest that the answers would come to us overnight. These are major issues which require serious analysis, and that is precisely what the Canadian government will do.

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[English]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. John Harvard (Winnipeg—St. James): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister for International Trade, pursuant to the GATT negotiations.

Since 1986, the government, without getting a single solitary thing in return, has given away two-price wheat, tax rebates on farm fuels, and much more. Yesterday, there were even more concessions. All of this has happened—and this is key—even before the heavy, tough negotiations have begun.

What else is the minister prepared to give away? Will the Western Grain Transportation Act be sacrificed?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I outlined yesterday what the amount of assistance is that Canada provides for its farmers. I said it was a tremendous amount, a huge amount. The Leader of the Opposition, of course, forgot to mention that it is a huge amount of assistance, \$8.8 billion a year.

If the hon. member wants to help the farmers of Canada, he will speak to his senatorial colleagues in the Liberal caucus and ask them to pass the GST bill which will save the farmers of Canada \$250 million. This is the most accurate estimate we have.

Mr. John Harvard (Winnipeg—St. James): Mr. Speaker, this minister should stop joking and get serious.

When it comes to trade distorting subsidies, Canada is not the worst offender. Yesterday, at the GATT the government proposed a 50 per cent across-the-board reduction in internal subsidies. The minister knows well that that is not going to alter the imbalance already there. Surely, Canadian farmers deserve a level playing-field.

Will the minister promise no reductions in Canadian supports until other countries reduce their subsidies to Canada's levels?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman reveals a total lack of knowledge of how the negotiations at the MTN operate. Canada's offer is made conditional on and subject to the other countries of the world making offers at least as good as our own offer. That is before our own offer will go into effect at all. If there is no agreement at the GATT, there will be no one agreeing to do anything with respect to trade distorting subsidy.

We intend to continue to support agriculture in ways that are non-trade distorting. We will continue to give very strong support to agriculture, but we will do it in ways that do not damage our own agricultural interests and do not crucify the western grain farmers, which the hon. gentleman completely ignores in his statements which reveal that he has not studied this subject at all. He should come to a briefing and then ask another question.