

*Supply*

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to indicate to the House and to the House leader of the Official Opposition that yes, we would be happy to co-operate on those conditions.

I want to indicate to him as well that we on this side, after our first speaker, the Minister of Agriculture, would also like to split our time.

**Mr. Riis:** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 43(2), again, I think that we should proceed this way. Any party will have the flexibility to break up its speakers into any segments. It should be left up to that particular organization.

The principle is certainly supported.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois):** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify one point. The Liberals have indicated that they would like to go seven and three.

On our side, we wish to do the ten and five which is an exact half-split.

[Translation]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois):** I may remind hon. members that in view of the three-minute period for questions and comments, their questions and comments must be concise.

[English]

**Mr. Althouse:** Mr. Speaker, to begin I would like to recognize that today the House has come forward with an unusual ruling and precedent setting ruling, I hope, in that the government has finally recognized that at times opposition days can be used in the manner that today's day is going to be used. This is something that backbenchers on all sides of the House have been fighting for ever since the McGrath commission in the mid-1980s. Today we finally have the first opportunity to permit that proposal to operate.

There were attempts last fall. I was part of that effort as well. I tried to get the House to discuss the question of the need for a special grain payment of some \$1.3 billion to grain and horticultural farmers. The government chose not to participate in that. It wanted to take the ruling and the precedent and the tradition that opposition days were supply days. This meant that the government and the opposition had to be opposed to each other and that if the vote were positive the government would have to fall. We tried to assure them that that would not

be the way the opposition would consider such a vote in that case.

I am pleased that we seem to have come to that point today at the beginning of this debate, particularly since the topic on the table today is so important for a broad section of Canadians living in rural communities.

The GATT talks were initiated in Uruguay and have been ongoing for four or five years now. Part of what precipitated them was a grain war that had broken out between the United States and the rest of the world, particularly the European Community. When we returned here on February 3 we were faced with a Dunkel report. Mr. Dunkel is the Secretary-General of the GATT and is in charge of all of the negotiations. He prepared a report and required governments to begin responding to that report in mid-January.

We arrived not knowing yet what the response of the Government of Canada was going to be. I moved to have an emergency debate. The Speaker in his wisdom decreed that this could probably be dealt with adequately in an opposition day, and so today is the day.

The motion itself was drafted with the assistance and acceptance of a great range of affected groups, many of whom have representatives today in the House. These are people from the various supply managed marketing boards from dairy through to chicken, turkey, eggs and hatching eggs. They are all here and they were all participating in the preparation of this motion.

We are hoping that so-called balanced approach of the Government of Canada will get back in balance and that the amended Dunkel report which will be discussed in the final stages of the negotiations of GATT will contain a clause strengthening and clarifying article XI 2(c)(i). That did not show up in the report and that distressed a great many Canadians who had been watching the application of the government's strategy of its so-called balanced approach at these talks.

• (1530)

I know there are some members of the government who have for a long time had great difficulty with the idea of supply management and of marketing boards in general. I know this because as a farmer and a member of farm organizations during the 1960s and 1970s and before coming here, I watched, sometimes with dismay, as members of the Conservative Party would go to the wall and fight to keep any effort at supply management and marketing boards from coming into law in this country. In fact, the marketing board legislation that the country has now requires coming to Parliament each