

Oral Questions

that we have the financial resources in Canada to take on Washington, because the reality is that we do not.

We have calendar years and we have fiscal years. I want to remind the Hon. Member that the most important year is the cropping year. Perhaps the Member will bear that in mind. The policy of our Government and the commitment we delivered yesterday are that if farmers respond with their applications with accuracy and on time, that will place us in a position to deliver the full billion dollar cash payment into their hands prior to the seeding of the 1987 crop.

● (1440)

INTERNATIONAL GRAIN AGREEMENT INQUIRY

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, I know the Minister realizes the real problem is the trade war with the ECM and the U.S. Farm Bill which amount to massive subsidies to farmers in those two areas. In light of that is the Government planning any new initiatives to renegotiate once again a meaningful international grain agreement whereby the price of grain is based on the cost of production?

Hon. John Wise (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, there is no question that has a very high priority. That is why the Prime Minister took the leadership role that he did in the world community. That is why the Secretary of State for External Affairs continues to play a lead role there, along with the Minister of Finance and my colleague, the Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board. We will keep right on pushing because the Hon. Member is absolutely right, that is important.

The Hon. Member should realize as well that we will be reconvening meetings with leaders of the farm commodity groups across the country to work together to chart a course and develop—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ADMINISTRATION

EXPENSES INCURRED RECEIVING IMPORTANT VISITORS—
GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart (Montreal—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Right Hon. Prime Minister and this is just to remind him that in 1985, he organized a superbash to improve his image in the eyes of the U.S. president. This cost \$2.6 million in taxpayers' money. Could the Prime Minister explain to Canadians why he wasted

their money in this way, while, at the same time, his Government was getting ready to cut unemployment insurance benefits for thousands of pre-retirees who were still looking for a job?

[English]

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member should realize that the Prime Minister has already stated that the Government of Canada will follow the policies he has directed. I do not think any Canadian should take a back seat in terms of the very best that Canada can put forward for its allies and friends. I think that is important.

Secondly, the relationship the Member assumes in his question simply does not stand up to any scrutiny whatsoever.

[Translation]

SITUATION OF EARLY RETIREES

Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart (Montreal—Sainte-Marie): I have a supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps the Prime Minister would care to defend his policy on pre-retirees.

Some Hon. Members: Order, order.

Mr. Malépart: Is the Prime Minister, who is quite willing to talk to foreign visitors from the United States and France, willing to be as cordial with his pre-retirees whose benefits were cut off, and do so by immediately reimbursing the 34,000 people whose unemployment insurance benefits were cut by his Government? Can he treat Canadians with respect as well?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Montreal—Sainte-Marie has changed his mind since last Friday, when he was congratulating the Government and the Minister—

Mr. Malépart: The Minister cheated us!

Mr. Bouchard: Mr. Speaker, anyone who read the information properly does not feel cheated. But people who are in a hurry to accuse the Government of backtracking were disappointed when they noticed the Government did not backtrack. In fact, it has simply applied the principles it upheld in the first place, but since applying these principles meant that a remedy was necessary in the case of people who were looking for employment, we provided that remedy.

Mr. Malépart: Tell the truth!

Mr. Bouchard: We listened to the Hon. Member earlier, and now I wish he would let me answer.

Mr. Malépart: Just tell the truth!

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Hon. Member for Humboldt—Lake Centre.