

Oral Questions

the Prime Minister give the House the assurance that when he has a meeting with the Premiers, the agenda will include reinforcing Clause 2 and providing additional assurances with respect to Clauses 15 and 28, in order to promote entrenchment of the rights of Canadian women?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry but I am not sure I understood the Hon. Member's comments. Is she trying to say, on behalf of her political group, that the Meech Lake Accord is flawed and that some radical surgery is necessary or a radical amendment in connection with the question she brought up, or is she talking about tabling some new proposals at a second round of discussions, because I get the impression that her party was basically in favour of the Meech Lake Accord and, in fact, I said yesterday that we were prepared to consider the other issues at a second round?

NECESSITY TO ENSURE WOMEN'S RIGHTS WON'T BE
JEOPARDIZED

Mrs. Lucie Pépin (Outremont): Mr. Speaker, the purpose of my question is to ensure that proposals will be made at the second meeting with the Premiers, to show Canadian women that their rights are not being threatened. This is not a protest against the Meech Lake proposals. I simply want to ensure that at a second meeting with the Premiers, you will confirm those rights in the Constitution.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, if there is the slightest doubt about this, I will do so with the requisite speed, and, I am sure, with the co-operation of Members on all sides of this House.

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[English]

AGRICULTURE

SPECIAL CANADIAN GRAINS PROGRAM—REQUEST THAT HAY
PRODUCERS BE INCLUDED

Mr. Gordon Taylor (Bow River): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Hon. Minister of Agriculture. Whereas the Hon. Minister, in answering my question last Thursday on the eligibility of hay farmers to share in the Special Canadian Grains Program, said in part "market prices must have been directly and detrimentally affected by the U.S. Farm Bill"; and whereas the market price for exported hay to Japan from Alberta and indeed from Canada is adversely affected because the U.S. has been and is subsidizing American compressed hay exported to Japan, will the Hon. Minister review the negative decision made, I believe without this information, by the farm leaders?

● (1150)

Hon. John Wise (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I am sure we must respect and admire the Hon. Member's

continuing interest in this problem. I must inform the Hon. Member that I have in front of me a briefing note from Mr. Pender, the administrator of the program, and also from Mr. Frank Clayton, the assistant deputy minister of policy, which confirms my answer to my hon. friend of last Thursday that, indeed, hay is not supported under the U.S. Farm Bill and that lower prices received from last year's hay crop really resulted from an overabundance of supply. Consequently, it cannot be regarded as eligible under the Bill.

The Hon. Member will know, Mr. Speaker, that our Government already provides assistance for alfalfa pellets and alfalfa cubes as eligible commodities under the Western Grain Transportation Act.

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EMPLOYMENT EQUITY

REQUEST THAT LEGISLATION BE INTRODUCED

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. What is his view on equal pay for work of equal value? The Prime Minister will recall that in the 1984 Leaders' debate the Prime Minister said

[Translation]

"I find it an aberration and an injustice that the Government would accept a principle and later smother it in practice."

[English]

Yesterday the head of the Human Rights Commission announced that fundamental reform of existing equal pay for work of equal value legislation is essential if women are to achieve pay equality. Will the Government introduce pay equity legislation just as soon as possible as recommended by Mr. Fairweather?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, in answer to the Hon. Member's question, I would like to say that it is always good to put some order in your own house before doing it elsewhere.

We have moved, and moved quickly, to implement equal pay for work of equal value in the federal Public Service in conjunction with the unions. All 13 of them are working closely with the Government to implement as quickly as possible pay equity that should influence positively roughly 81,000 female employees of the federal Public Service.

REQUEST THAT PRIORITY BE GIVEN TO DRAFTING LEGISLATION

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Minister of Justice. He will know the Human Rights Commission concerns a much broader sector than that to which the President of the Treasury Board has referred. It is not good enough to limit this to employees of the federal Government. We need fair pay now.