

Oral Questions

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, we will do better than that. We won't do it tomorrow because the Prime Minister did it today. Only a few minutes ago he met with farm leaders, as I told the leader of the New Democratic Party.

The Prime Minister met President Delors for over three hours in Paris just a few weeks ago. He had conversations with the leaders of various countries, including Germany and the European Economic Community. He also had talks with the British Prime Minister. As he said this morning, he will be getting in touch with these leaders in the next few days to reaffirm Canada's position. As matters stand, we must feel we are supported by everyone here in Canada, and I would ask the hon. member to support farm producers and the government on the mission we will attempt once again when we go to Europe in the next few days to look for allies. I hope the hon. member will be with us to support us. That is what we need.

Mr. Mark Assad (Gatineau—La Lièvre): I can assure you, Sir, that we stand behind our farmers, but I am not so sure the farmers believe you, and that is the problem.

The question is this. Last Wednesday, a motion was adopted by this House asking for the Prime Minister's personal involvement. That is what farmers expect to happen this week because they will be in Ottawa at one of their biggest gatherings. Can you give us the assurance the Prime Minister will make a personal commitment to these farmers?

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, with respect, I will explain once more. The Prime Minister just spent two hours with Canadian farm leaders during which he unreservedly reaffirmed the Canadian position and our government's support for a position that we have been defending at GATT for two years. I realize this does not really suit the members of the Bloc Québécois. They would rather see us miss the target, which would probably give them a boost at the national level. However, we intend to defend our position, no matter what. We stand behind our farm producers and we will continue to defend them.

[English]

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade. The Prime Minister said in Peterborough last Friday that Canada would not be filing tariff schedules on March 1 as required in the GATT arrangements.

I want to ask the Minister for International Trade if this means that Canada, when it files its commitments for agriculture, will simply be providing that import controls for those supply managed products will be provided through a strengthened and clarified article XI. If that is the case, will the government be getting the support of the other five nations who support our position for a strengthened and clarified article XI?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, in response to a question from his colleague just a few minutes ago, I said that we would not be filing tariff schedules on the supply managed products. We will be filing tariff schedules on all other products so that we will be fully engaged in negotiation.

As my hon. friend is well aware, and I know he supports the position that we are taking, we are seeking a strengthening and clarification of article XI. We believe the approach that we are taking on March 1 is fully consistent with that.

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, I think we would be much more comfortable if the government would simply be filing with the GATT negotiations that we want to maintain our import controls through a strengthened and clarified article XI and that we would seek the support of the other five countries that support our position.

Last week the House of Commons passed a joint resolution calling on the Prime Minister to become personally involved in the GATT negotiations, to meet with the President of the United States and the President of the European Economic Community.

Farmers want to know what the government has accomplished in six years of negotiations. We have only five countries supporting our position. What has the government actually accomplished? When is he going to