

Oral Questions

What I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. member is that the Government of Canada developed a position with the stakeholders. The stakeholders understand that the present article XI leaves them very vulnerable. They have said: "This is one way of maintaining it." We say: "That is the way we want to have it maintained". However, the hon. member understands something else.

The support we need is what we are continuing to request and seek of other countries but Canada alone, out of 108 countries, is not able to change the negotiations. Canada, joined with other countries, is able to be successful and that is what we will continue to do.

This government has no intention of changing the position. It was developed with the stakeholders. It will be consistent in the benefit of those stakeholders and if they support us, we will be stronger in presenting our position.

Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade. The minister should be aware that the head of Canada's supply management commodities said today that the government's acceptance of the GATT would destroy their \$10 billion industry and put in jeopardy nearly 95,000 Canadian jobs.

They have also requested that the government not submit tariff schedules for supply managed products March 1 as requested by Dunkel. Will the government table or not table these tariffs by March 1? Canadian farmers have a right to know.

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, it might be of interest to the hon. member that while I was in Switzerland this past weekend, I had a number of meetings with my counterparts from other countries and presented the position as set out by my two colleagues on what we are seeking through the GATT negotiations in relation to the supply management system.

We have meetings of agriculture ministers this week, trade ministers next week. There will be meetings of the government with the supply management sectors and based on that series of meetings we will be able to

develop in concert with all the interested parties the answer to the hon. member's question.

Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his response, but my supplementary question is for the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister should be aware that farm leaders of supply managed commodities have requested that he meet with them in February to discuss this very important issue. Will the Prime Minister meet with these leaders in February and will he reassure them that he rejects the present GATT proposals as they relate to supply management?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I have met with the agricultural leaders on a number of occasions.

The Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of State for Agriculture are setting up precisely the meeting that my hon. friend is seeking. I think it is very important that the leaders of all of the farm groups, particularly these days in respect of marketing boards, have an opportunity to discuss with the government in a very full and open way the concerns that they have about international negotiations.

I point out to my hon. friend, the NDP and others from the Liberal Party who is raising it, that in questioning the conduct of negotiation policy by the Government of Canada at GATT, it might have been appropriate to mention that the premier of Quebec who was also actively involved with this farm problem indicated the day before yesterday that

[*Translation*]

Premier Bourassa has full confidence in the Minister for International Trade to negotiate the new GATT agreements and he thinks that Quebec is better protected by the plan on which we are now working than with the present formula.

[*English*]

I was very glad of that statement by the premier of Quebec because it represents confidence in the policies that we have been following. But we have to do more and we have to make sure that all of the farm groups are more actively associated with our initiatives so that we can better defend their very legitimate interests at the GATT.