

calls upon the international community to provide immediate assistance to the people of East Timor.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*Translation*]

AGRICULTURE

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to welcome back the Prime Minister from the Sommet de la Francophonie, in France, where he showed Canada and the world that there are French speaking Canadians across this country and that we all have an interest in the advancement of French language and culture, not only in Canada but throughout the world.

[*English*]

Now that we are back to local business my question is to the Prime Minister. Today more than 100 farmers and political leaders from western Canada are in Ottawa. They are here because the situation of our prairie farmers is desperate. All this government seems to be able to do at this time is stall for time.

Massive European and American subsidies are killing Canadian agriculture. Discussions at the GATT are going nowhere. I would like to make a suggestion to the Prime Minister.

• (1420)

Will the government convene an international summit on the grain price war with the Americans, the Europeans and the other producers outside GATT because we are going nowhere at this time within GATT?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with this very important problem on an ongoing basis. As a member of the Cairns group Canada was the country that put the question of the trade distorting agricultural subsidies on the G-7 table in Tokyo in 1986. We have fought the issue through the GATT now for some years.

We are getting to the crunch momentarily. In Paris last week I had a lengthy working meeting with Jacques Delors, president of the community on precisely this

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point. We hope we will be able to persuade both the Europeans and the Americans to cease their suicidal subsidies that have the effect of not only distorting trade but driving Canadian producers out of business unfairly.

This is the exact type of reform that we are seeking through the GATT and through our ongoing international negotiations.

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Agriculture I would like to ask the Prime Minister: While this government drags its feet on the money it has decided to give the farmers, Farm Credit Corporation is running around the prairies foreclosing on farmers. Families are being driven from the land they love.

If the government will not agree to give farmers the money they need right now, will the government instruct the Farm Credit Corporation not to foreclose on farmers who have to wait until next year to receive the money that this government has promised to them?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, a similar question was raised yesterday. If the hon. Leader of the Opposition has any examples of unjustifiable actions taken by the Farm Credit Corporation, I know that I would be interested in it and so would the Minister of Agriculture.

I think the hon. Leader of the Opposition would agree that the best way to solve the farm problem is to solve the trade problem. That is the number one initiative. That is the most important initiative that we are taking. The Prime Minister has provided leadership in the international forum in respect of that issue.

Back here we are supporting the agricultural industry and particularly the grains and oilseeds sector in an unprecedented fashion. If we compare the direct support that has been provided in the last five or six years as compared to the previous five years from 1981 to 1984, we will see that there is almost a sixfold increase in direct support.

As a matter of fact, as I indicated to the coalition of farmers that I met today, I reminded them that some \$2.9 billion will be paid out in support of the grains and oilseeds sector and the agricultural sector between now and spring seeding. That is a substantial amount of money.