

*Oral Questions*

We proudly voted against that act on October 16, 1970.

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**ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

[English]

**GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE**

**Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Agriculture. Right now, the government is engaged in intense negotiations at the GATT on issues vital to the future of Canadian agriculture and, therefore, to the future of a large part of our Canadian economy. Yesterday here in this House the Minister for International Trade said, and I quote:

The Minister of Agriculture should be ashamed at the amount of assistance he is giving Canadian farmers.

As far as I am aware, the Minister of Agriculture remained silent in the face of this statement. He did not deny it or contradict it. So I ask the minister about this statement. How can Canadian farmers have confidence in this government's ability to protect their interests? Is this not a strange way for this government to strengthen its hand by saying it is too generous to the farmers of this country?

**Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture):** Mr. Speaker, I used to know the Leader of the Opposition when he had a sense of humour. He has obviously lost it. Even *The Globe and Mail* detected that the comment made by the Minister for International Trade was being made tongue in cheek.

Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, he may be interested in noting how some of the farm leaders have responded to the very balanced and well thought out position that has been put forth by the Government of Canada in the GATT negotiations as they relate to agriculture. Mr. Don Knoerr, president of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture said that the national farm group strongly supports the main thrust of the Canadian government's proposals. I think that is a pretty solid endorsement of our position.

**Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Agriculture. I have a statement in my hand which was just released by the Canadian milk producers concerning the government's GATT position. They say:

The Canadian offer regarding minimum access and the reduction of internal support to milk producers will be of no benefit to Canadian consumers and will severely penalize Canadian milk producers.

This is a statement just issued. I say to the Minister of Agriculture that this is a serious matter and he should not be making statements intended to be taken tongue in cheek, although the Minister for International Trade, in making one, may well have had not just his tongue but both feet in his mouth.

• (1420)

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the government tabled a proposal that would raise market share of imported dairy products from 2.5 per cent to 5 per cent. I want to ask the minister why this government offered to double the market share of our competitors and how far he intends to go with this absurd and perilous policy.

**Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)):** I am amazed at the hon. member's question. Last week, the Minister of Agriculture and I met the Dairy Farmers of Canada. Yesterday in Montreal, with Deputy Minister Denis, our representative in Geneva, and other parties, I met representatives of the Dairy Farmers of Canada and the Union des producteurs agricoles. Today, these people issued a press release, stating that the position tabled by Canada in Geneva was a positive development.

I want to make it quite clear that the status quo—and everybody across Canada agrees—is unacceptable, and that we had to table a proposal with GATT that would be positive and make the rest of the world realize the Canadian structure is probably the best in the world, but we had to convince our partners. Our own people could not agree more that the status quo was unacceptable. Since we are not like the Liberals, who merely complain whenever something doesn't suit them, we have tabled a position that reflects the objectives of agriculture for the twenty-first century.