

Oral Questions

country. Will the Government make a commitment to maintain commuter railway services in the Montreal region? If so, will the federal Government participate in a joint program with the Government of Quebec and Montreal region municipalities to maintain these commuter services and thus prevent the closing of the Saint-Hilaire line which will otherwise disappear on August 31?

[English]

Mr. Blaine A. Thacker (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate moment there is no doubt that the Government will be prepared to consider any type of combination of possibilities. If an area is in trouble, it is because people are no longer using the service, whether it is VIA Rail service or traffic service, because they have often moved to other modes. That is the reality of the market-place.

CN finds itself in a position where some one-third of its lines carry over 90 per cent of its traffic. That means that two-thirds of its lines are carrying only one-third of its traffic. It simply cannot carry that on and be competitive with the trucking system that is becoming very sophisticated in Canada.

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TRADE**CANADA-UNITED STATES FREE TRADE AGREEMENT—ONTARIO GRAPE GROWERS**

Mr. Girve Fretz (Erie): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture. Recently the Minister announced an adjustment program for the grape growers of the Province of British Columbia. Why has the Government not made a similar adjustment for the grape growers of the Province of Ontario?

Mr. Lee Clark (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, this Government is fully committed to a policy and a process of consultation with provincial governments and with producers, wherever they may be. We are pleased by the results of those negotiations with the Government and the producers of British Columbia. As the Hon. Member for Erie has indicated, the results were announced some time ago when a package of some \$28 million was announced.

I want to make it very clear that there is an offer on the table with respect to the difficulties the producers are encountering here in the Province of Ontario, difficulties which they are encountering for a variety of reasons that have already been discussed at some length during Question Period today. The federal Government has put an offer on the table. The provincial government is currently looking at that offer and I would hope that there could be a resolution to this problem in the not too distant future. In fact, I would hope it would come very soon.

I would also point out that we as a Government are fully committed to the process of keeping producers informed, wherever they may be, including the producers who I understand are here today. I also understand that Department of Agriculture officials have announced that they would be happy to meet with the producers to whom the Hon. Member for Hamilton East has referred, but I regret that apparently that offer has not been accepted.

Ms. Copps: That is false, Mr. Speaker, that is false.

An Hon. Member: That is a lie. That is a lie.

Mr. Speaker: I do not know who said that, but it does not help the Chamber and it does not help the Speaker. I will not pursue it further, but please, it is not necessary.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE**PROPOSED ACQUISITION OF NUCLEAR POWERED SUBMARINES**

Mr. Len Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Mr. Speaker, the Government, and in particular the Minister of National Defence, used to grandstand all over in Canada and in NATO circles telling everyone they were going to bring on stream 10 to 12 nuclear powered submarines by the year 2012, 24 years after this Government will have been defeated. The rhetoric has really cooled of late and silence seems to be the order of the day. The Government has long passed the date it said it was going to make an announcement.

Is the Government now prepared to admit that it was wrong and that it will no longer proceed with this ill-conceived idea?

Mr. Bud Bradley (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member raises a very serious question, as he is well aware. I would be interested to know if the Hon. Member is now showing that he no longer supports such a move by the Government of Canada to modernize Canada's Armed Forces.

I think the Hon. Member will find that it is Canada's intent to modernize its navy and to provide its navy with the best technical equipment available. I think he will also be aware that the Minister of National Defence stated very recently that the announcement would be made soon.

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Len Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Mr. Speaker, that answer is the square root of nothing. The Hon. Member knows that I support the Armed Forces and the refurbishing of them. However, this Party does not support nuclear submarines.

Will the Government proceed with this \$8 billion ill-conceived purchase of 10 to 12 nuclear powered submarines or will it not? That is the question. Perhaps the Parliamentary