

Oral Questions

Canada has been working consistently since the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq to bring about a peaceful resolution through the United Nations.

I suggest to the hon. member that what he sees taking place, the enforcement of the resolutions by the world and that world condemnation, is proof that Canada and other countries including the United States are prepared at this time to work through the United Nations.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Mr. John Harvard (Winnipeg St. James): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. We in this House should not forget the plight of Canada's farmers.

Last spring this government took away interest-free cash advances from farmers. That was a horrible mistake, and it hurt farmers.

In the face of the current difficult situation—plummeting prices, lost markets, and high interest rates—I want to know whether the Minister of Agriculture would restore interest-free cash advances.

I think the farmers of this country deserve an answer now.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure my hon. friend that we are not overlooking the needs of farmers.

As I indicated in the House yesterday, we are looking at several options, one being the hope or expectation that we can develop a long-term safety net stabilization program that would provide confidence, stability, and security for our grains and oilseeds sector.

I appreciate the magnitude of the question, and I will certainly take his question as representation.

Mr. John Harvard (Winnipeg St. James): Mr. Speaker, the answer from the hon. minister lacks precision. The farmers are in a desperate situation and they need answers now.

In light of the horrible mistake that he made, I would suggest to the hon. minister that he swallow his pride and deal with this issue in a serious way. If that means going over and twisting the arm of the Minister of

Finance, I will be more than happy to come down there and help him.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: I take it that is not literally physical force the hon. member is advocating. Perhaps the hon. member could put his question.

Mr. Harvard: Physical, I do not care.

I have a supplementary question for the same minister. Unfortunately interest-free cash advances are not good enough any more. The farmers of this country need an emergency aid package, and I want to know whether he is considering an emergency aid package now.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure whether the hon. member's offer should be interpreted as a threat or as a favour but, having said that, the hon. member knows very well that this government provided \$500 million in emergency assistance. Some of that assistance is still in the process of being circulated to farmers, and I am sure that is appreciated.

I think it bears re-mentioning that had the provinces been able to comply with matching funds, we certainly would not have been in the same position as we are today. We are looking at what can be done, but I repeat that I hope I can count on the hon. member's support in developing a long-term safety net program which will serve the long-term future needs of the grains and oilseeds sector. I can assure him that we are actively working on that.

* * *

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Mr. Rey Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, the amount of food on the table and the amount of knowledge in the mind determine to a large extent the health of children, and a healthy childhood invites freedom from all types of abuse and exploitation.

Since the Prime Minister is going to New York this weekend to chair one of the most important international meetings, the World Summit for Children, for their sake, is he now prepared to table in this House a comprehensive national strategy that would set the stage for a war on poverty on behalf of the children of Canada