

Oral Questions

● (1450)

In light of the fact that the Government of Nepal has endorsed the Helsinki Accords and the human rights resolution providing for the freedom of religion, will the Minister please assure the House now that everything possible is being done to ensure that this Canadian citizen will be released from prison in Nepal as quickly as possible?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Monique Landry (Minister for External Relations): Mr. Speaker, we are aware of Mr. Budd's detention. He has retained a lawyer. We asked the American consulate to offer him yesterday . . . and we are still waiting for answers.

[*English*]

REQUEST THAT GOVERNMENT PROVIDE ASSISTANCE

Mr. Joe Fontana (London East): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister for the answer and her assistance thus far.

Reports indicate that he may be in prison for two years before trial. Mr. Budd in a recent letter to his mother states that he is not satisfied with the help he is getting from his own Government. The Minister says that there is someone from the American Embassy perhaps assisting.

I ask the Minister again to reassure Mr. Budd's family and all Canadians that no stone will be left unturned by his own Government to make sure that this innocent man is freed? We need not the Americans to help us with this individual but our own Canadian Government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Hon. Monique Landry (Minister for External Relations): Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell my hon. colleague that, when we do not have a consul in a given country, the normal procedure is to act through a foreign consul who has offered to help us.

The American consulate was supposed to meet with Mr. Budd yesterday and to report to us afterwards. But, after experiencing communication problems in that remote area, we will probably get more information today.

I would also like to tell my hon. colleague that he can rest assured that the Canadian Government will assume

all its responsibilities and give Mr. Budd the help he needs.

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[*English*]**AGRICULTURE****DROUGHT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

Mr. Ray Funk (Prince Albert—Churchill River): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Minister of Agriculture. Given the fact that thousands of farm families are still waiting for their drought assistance cheques which he promised them so that they could pay the bills piling up on their kitchen tables, and given the fact that not a dollar of the \$850 million promised to grain farmers by the Minister of Agriculture appears in the Supplementary Estimates for 1988-89, could the Minister please tell the House whether he is still haggling with his provincial counterparts over this money? Or is he finally able to tell us when farmers and their bankers will be getting this money?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, we announced and signalled to the agricultural community as soon as we possibly could, the extent of the magnitude of the drought program and the need to have it put in place as quickly as possible so that farmers could arrange their financial affairs in an appropriate fashion.

The forms are close to being ready for being sent out to the producers. We hope that they will be out in the next week or 10 days. Everything is proceeding as it should, consistent with the program that was announced.

TIMING OF PAYMENTS

Mr. Ray Funk (Prince Albert—Churchill River): Mr. Speaker, since obviously the Minister of Agriculture does not have much more idea today about when this money will be coming out than he did 10 days ago, I would like to address a supplementary question to the Prime Minister.

In light of the genesis of this program which was announced ten days before the election, and which was reconfirmed in the House two days before the Assiniboia, Saskatchewan, by-election, could the Prime Minister tell us when he is planning to call the Beaver River by-election so that farmers and, indeed the Prime