

Oral Questions

On June 23, 1985 a bomb killed 329 people on board Air-India flight 182. Two hundred and eighty people on board that plane were Canadian. There were 80 children on board. It was the biggest mass murder ever in Canadian history.

For the last six years this government has refused a royal commission of inquiry into this tragedy. Now that the criminal charges emanating from the Narita bombing have been dealt with by the criminal courts, will the government now initiate a full commission of inquiry to investigate all the disturbing questions that have been raised by this tragedy?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, the House will know that the government has been conducting an inquiry through the RCMP into this matter. I am informed that there are ongoing plans to reinvigorate the inquiry this summer with an effort to recover as much of the hull as can be recovered from the ocean floor.

I appreciate the concern of my hon. friend. We are all concerned about this and we are trying to get to the bottom of the matter. The investigation is ongoing.

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister knows that the criminal investigation has come to a dead end. There has been a commission of inquiry in Cork, Ireland and another in New Delhi, India. Notwithstanding the fact that 280 people on board this flight were Canadians, the Canadian government has yet to conduct a royal commission of inquiry. We know about the advanced warnings that the Government of Canada had. We know about the erased tapes. We know about the CSIS and RCMP bungling. We know about the false affidavits. The families of the 280 Canadian victims are waiting for a royal commission of inquiry.

• (1450)

Can the Prime Minister of Canada explain why the conduct of Sinclair Stevens warranted a royal commission of inquiry and the biggest mass murder ever in Canadian history does not?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I reiterate my answer to the previous question of my hon. friend. The government is concerned. The investigation is ongoing and we are making every effort to bring this matter to a conclusion.

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

A western newspaper, *The Winnipeg Free Press* reported yesterday that it was the Prime Minister's decision to open the Canada-U.S. border to wheat, despite his ministers' disapproval. Can the Prime Minister indicate to the House why he overruled his ministers to clear the way for U.S. grains to come into western Canada?

Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform my colleague that agriculture is of great interest to the Prime Minister. That is one of the reasons Canada entered into the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement.

The hon. member comes from the province of Saskatchewan where a lot of our production in agriculture, as he and everyone knows, is involved in grains. Within the free trade agreement between Canada and the United States, there is a clause that opens the United States border for Canadian grains. There is a clause that says when support for Canadian grains—wheat, oats and barley—become equal or higher than the United States, we would then remove the tariffs on American grain. We have done that, because the support to Canadian wheat farmers is higher in Canada than the support to farmers in the United States.

Another reason, as the member knows, is that in the first seven months of this crop year we have exported 400,000 tonnes of wheat to the United States. We did not want to jeopardize that and neither did the Prime Minister.

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is for the same minister.

The calculations that were used to indicate equality between the two countries do not take proper account of the fact that an important part of Canada's payments accumulate because of premiums paid by farmers and governments over a series of years generate pay-outs on the years that are chosen to decide the equality. Why did this government not stand up and get a proper accounting system to reflect—

An hon. member: They do not want to.