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News in brief

**Greek farmers to
end their blockade**

GREEK farmers voted yesterday to end their crippling blockade of the country's main roads and railways, 25 days after launching their protest against economic austerity measures.

To growing disgruntlement with their action, farmers leading the revolt from the central town of Larissa announced that they had decided to stop blocking roads with their tractors as a goodwill gesture during the festive season.

The blockade not only cut Greece in half but sealed its international borders, stranding thousands of foreign lorry drivers. Its effects are believed to have cost the economy more than £60 million.

The prime minister, Costas Simitis, has faced a barrage of strikes and protests from workers denouncing his tough budget, which was passed by parliament on Saturday. The stringent fiscal policies form part of his government's efforts to meet the criteria for a single European currency.

The farmers said they would reconvene after the holidays with a view to staging more protests. — *Helena Smith, Athens.*
