

Government Orders

During the 1988 free trade debate the agriculture minister said that the current Minister of Finance and he stood strongly against the trade deal. He said it was not a fair deal but a sellout of our nation. How could it be a sellout in 1988 and then supported in 1993?

There are some real positive aspects to the North American free trade deal. Certainly it is not the perfect deal. Maybe there is no such perfect deal. The problem is that the minister of agriculture and the Liberal government flip-flopped on the issue. They did not keep their word. It is very unfortunate that we do not know what direction we can take from the words of the agriculture minister and his colleagues.

I would like to read one more quote with regard to the durum wheat dispute last year with the Americans. The agriculture minister said:

Those on the other side of the border who might think that action can be taken against Canada with no consequences, should think again. There will be consequences—I want our American trading partners to know that Canada is not going to roll over and play dead—For every action there will be a reaction.

That is a quote from the *Ottawa Citizen* dated March 30, 1994.

In the newspaper *The Western Producer* the minister said: "No deal is better than a bad deal". That was April 16, 1994. As we know, the minister of agriculture caved into the Americans and agreed to export restrictions of 50 per cent of previous exports to the United States of Canadian durum. Again that is very regrettable. Again the minister of agriculture did not match his actions and his words.

I want to read one final quote regarding the agriculture minister because the Canadian people need to be aware of this. It is with regard to deficit reduction. As members know, for some time Reformers have called for the government to come to grips with the deficit. I have a very interesting statement made by the minister of agriculture in the past with regard to the deficit. He said it is more than irresponsible, it is immoral. Those are the words of the agriculture minister.

I agree with the minister of agriculture. It is immoral to pass on the deficit and debt to future generations. However, the agriculture minister is part of a government that is adding billions of dollars to the debt by annual deficits, last year, in the current budget and in the one that is projected for next year.

I have three primary criticisms of the Crow buy-off in the Liberal budget. I would like to put those on record. First, the government's action on the Crow benefit comes as too little, too late. Three years ago Reformers suggested that the funds for the transportation subsidy for grain should be rolled over into a trade distortion adjustment program that would protect producers from damage received as a result of the grain trade wars. We did not hide this information. It was very public. The Liberals had access to it when they came to power. They determined that

they would stick with the old Crow until they could bargain it away in the GATT negotiations when they had no cards left to play in the deck.

Second, the government should have designed and introduced a transition plan prior to the discontinuance of the Crow benefit, not a year or more after it ends. It seems incomprehensible that the federal government would end the Crow benefit on July 31, 1995 and then say it is going to introduce a transition program in the 1996-97 fiscal year. That is really putting the cart before the horse. The Liberals are going to eliminate something and then not have any idea what they are going to put in place for transition. I cannot fathom that thinking.

Third, the government is justified in reducing support to agriculture if, and only if, it reduces spending in other departments and programs by equal amounts so that farmers do not carry an unfair portion of the pain caused by fiscal restraint. This has not happened. In many cases, which I will mention in a few minutes, the federal government has actually increased spending. This is unacceptable. The minister of agriculture has obviously not considered those most vulnerable to the loss of the Crow, namely young renters. I have had many calls from young farmers in my constituency who are renters. They will lose at both ends with the Crow buy-off. First, they are not recipients of the \$1.6 billion buyout. Second, they will bear the cost for the additional transportation with the ending of the subsidy. This is truly regrettable because often these young farmers have a pretty tight cash flow situation and low equity. They are not able to go to their banker and command the same infusion of cash for their operations. It is very difficult for them to plan to farm again this year.

• (1150)

I want to really stress this. I am not complaining about the cuts in support to agriculture. I will say it again so that it is clear to the House. I am not complaining about the cuts in support to agriculture. Probably Reform would have done some of the cutting differently and I think better.

I want to point an accusing finger at the government because it did not level with Canadians about the way cuts would be made. It did not level with farmers about how cuts would be made. Particularly it did not level with the western grain farmers about how cuts would be made. It did not level with supply management about how it would deal with that industry. It failed to fulfil its promises. That is truly regrettable.

While farmers took a triple whammy in the budget, the government continues to subsidize special interest and advocacy groups such as the National Action Committee on the Status of Women and others. It continues to provide huge tax breaks and subsidies to big business and doles out millions to western economic diversification and other regional agencies. The Lib-