

Supply

I remember very well as I was running for the nomination for my party in my constituency that this debate was raging in the farm communities in Saskatchewan. The Premier of Saskatchewan, the Hon. Grant Devine, came to Prince Albert and provided a briefing to the citizenry of the area on the free trade agreement. He made two points very, very clearly with respect to agriculture. His big point, of course, was that Saskatchewan is an agriculture producing province, something on which our economy depends. Obviously he could not very well come out in support of an agreement that would clobber the heck out of the leading industry in his own province.

The premier made two points that stuck with me. One is that our access to markets through the supply-management system would in fact be enhanced under this free trade agreement because it was spelled out in that agreement that it was more than iron-clad, that our access to markets would be better than it was.

Second, he said the reason we had to get the free trade agreement and why farmers had to support it was because there was all kinds of potential for the sale of red meat into the American market. Without the free trade agreement that access for red meat not only was not assured but could well be in jeopardy.

I want to say that there were farmers who listened to the remarks of the Premier and who were in some ways convinced by that. They thought we were doing well selling red meat into the American market. We do not want to lose that market. There had been threats of countervail on pork. There was an element of the farm community that said yes, free trade in agriculture is going to be a benefit to farmers.

What have we seen since then? I think it is becoming quite a litany. First, as somebody mentioned previously, we gave up two-price wheat. There was a commitment at that time that the \$280 million that we got under the two-price wheat system would continue to flow to farmers. I have yet to see where that flow-through to farmers has come or where the substitution has been on the two-price wheat payment. That just dropped right through the cracks in terms of any kind of benefit to the producer at all.

Second, the marketing board structure has never been under more threat in this country than it is right now since its inception in the 1960s. We have seen that through GATT. It does not really matter, as the Member for Saskatoon—Humboldt pointed out before. What the

free trade agreement has done is give the Americans two routes to get at us, two routes for harassment and they are using both of them. They used them in the case of ice cream and yogurt. If that should stand there is no question that the whole supply management system would start to unravel.

The point is not so much the technicalities of what is happening, but that the Premier of Saskatchewan and agriculture spokespersons for the government made it very clear that what we were entering into is an era of understanding and harmony, that there would not be any more harassment and that we had to co-operate. People like to hear that kind of thing. We do not want to be fighting the Americans for markets or fighting harassment again and again. It is not our way. Where do you see Canadian action against American producers? There was one on corn, but it has been very seldom that Canadian producers have taken even the opportunities that they do have to beat on American farmers. That is not our way of doing things. We were told that it would not happen to us, and it is.

Furthermore, the whole thrust of the government's agriculture policy is taking us down a road that interacts with the free trade agreement in such a way as to lead us to an agriculture economy that is going to be based on agri-business very much the way the American agriculture community has moved almost totally into an agri-business kind of mould. We see the removal of oats from the Canadian Wheat Board.

Certainly everybody agrees with those who say that we need to process more oats at home. There is no reason oats cannot be processed in Canada under the auspices of the Canadian Wheat Board. We have milled flour in this country for years and done a very good job of exporting flour, something which operates under the Canadian Wheat Board. There is no way oats cannot operate just as effectively through the Canadian Wheat Board.

That action was taken in the face of the virtually unanimous opinion of the farm communities. Polls were done by Decima Research, a company the government tends to listen to during election time and most other times. A poll done by Decima Research found that approximately 70 per cent of farmers wanted to keep oats under the Canadian Wheat Board. The reason they want to do that is because the institution of the Canadian Wheat Board has been the main bulwark of our defence and the most successful aspect of our penetration to international markets when it comes to the export of