

What did the previous government do? It took us right out of the international market. Our production dropped from 18 million tonnes one year to 9 million tonnes the next. What happened to the United States and the Europeans? They kept right on increasing their production. It took us seven long years to get our production back to the level it was when we started the LIFT program, an absolutely incredible situation. When we had what came to be known as the great grain robbery, which was the period of time when the Soviets came into the market, bought all the grain and drove up prices, we did not have any grain to sell.

• (1230)

Let me contrast that to what this government has done. We faced a very difficult situation, not entirely similar, but in many ways very analogous.

Let me deal with the Europeans and the Americans. Nobody talked about the Europeans. It is all: "blame the Americans for everything". Nobody said anything about the Japanese. But what did the previous government do? They took us right out of the international market.

What did we do? We stayed with the farmers. In a time of very difficult markets we actually increased our market share from something like 19 per cent of the world market in 1986-1987 to 23 per cent two years later, as contrasted to the time of the previous government when our production dropped by 50 per cent.

If we are going to listen to the members who just spoke in the House, they do not offer any alternatives. We have to look at their record. That is their record. Whenever there is a difficult international situation as far as agriculture is concerned, they run, avoid it, don't face up to it. Not only did we increase our market share, we did it at a cost to the Treasury. It was the largest deficit in the history of the Canadian Wheat Board, and they talk about support for the Canadian Wheat Board. The easiest thing would have been to say: "Don't sell. We are in a very difficult situation fiscally, don't sell". We did not do that. We worked with the board and the finance department on a day by day basis. We ran over a \$200 million deficit in the pool accounts three years ago. To me that does not look like anything but total support for the Canadian Wheat Board.

Supply

Let me talk about what happened to farmers and why farmers are still facing some very difficult situations in this country. You want to talk about interest rates. Farmers have to borrow money. By the way, it is not all gloom and doom. I do not know whether I am going to have enough time to correct all of the misinformation that was put out here so far this morning. I am not in any way signalling that there are no problems. Certainly there are. But some of those problems are coming around getting to be a little less severe than they were one and two years ago.

With regard to interest rates, I have neighbours where I farm who used to listen to the Bank of Canada rate in 1981, 1982 and 1983, as much as they listened to the weather forecast. When you had interest rates that got to a peak in August of 1981 of 22.75 per cent and five-year mortgages were going at 21.75 per cent, you can understand why farmers were concerned.

We talk about the variables that the farmers have to put up with, such as weather, markets, grasshoppers and wind. When you have a farmer who listens as much and pays as much attention to what happens every Thursday over at the Bank of Canada as he does to the weather reports, that tells you something has been going on with the government. A lot of us, including myself and a lot of my neighbours, were crippled by those kind of interest rates. To have the Leader of the Opposition get up and suggest that the policies of this government are going to make Canada less than self-sufficient and that we will have to go and buy food from somebody else and offer no suggestions based on his record it is *Alice in Wonderland*. It is incredible.

Let me tell you what has been happening, Mr. Speaker. We have about a \$20 billion industry in agriculture, of which somewhere close to half is exported, which means \$8 billion and on occasion over \$9 billion worth of exports. From 1986 to 1988, we have doubled the trade surplus in agriculture. We have gone from \$1.8 billion as an agricultural trade surplus to \$3.6 billion. That does not sound to me like a country that is going to become dependent on somebody else for food.

We export 80 per cent of the wheat that we grow, 70 per cent of the canola, 50 per cent of the barley, and somewhere close to 40 per cent of our hogs. We do not produce pineapples or oranges. We do not produce carrots and lettuce when the ground is frozen and it is 20 below. We know that. We have to import those kind of things. But, on balance, we have been running a \$3 billion and \$4 billion trade surplus in agricultural products.