

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

• (2000)

The total farm debt in Canada has now reached a staggering \$22 billion. The farming situation is so bad that most farmers now earn more off-farm income than on-farm income. One-third of all farm income is made from off-farm jobs as a consequence of the poor income situation on the farm.

On the other hand the New Democratic Party has provided a tremendous amount of encouragement to the farmers in Saskatchewan. That was evidenced by the recent election campaign. Certainly, the people of Saskatchewan indicated that the New Democratic Party was more trustworthy than the Government in place.

The New Democratic Party did support agriculture, and we do support the farm groups that oppose the free trade deal that we are discussing in this legislation.

Mr. McDermid: You do not support the Cattlemen's Association.

Mr. Taylor: The family farm stabilization program that the New Democratic Party discussed during the election campaign is a program to assure farmers of a basic income for their production. It was a program designed to take the place of the current haphazard and *ad hoc* programs of the Government. This program ties the price to the U.S. target price so that the Canadian farmer is getting the same benefit on the world and international market as American counterparts, those same American counterparts whose organizations are threatening to destroy the marketing system that is selling that product on the international market.

According to an article in October the United States Wheat Board talked about the U.S. Government desiring to make the elimination of the Canadian Wheat Board one of its demands in the negotiations on agricultural reform.

The New Democratic Party also calls for a revamping of the Farm Credit Corporation, an overhaul that makes it a true farmers' bank and not a lending institution of last resort, as the Government has set it up. We also talked about tax fairness for farmers to ensure the restoration of five year block averaging in recognition of fluctuating incomes on the farms.

We were also talking about funding to be provided for farm water, soil conservation research, and financial assistance for farmers to explore new conservation techniques or retire farmland for conservation purposes. A major problem in the near future will be the depletion

of the land in western Canada. That land which supports and nurtures the economy of western Canada is slowly being depleted. Something has to be done in conservation terms in order to protect it.

The free trade deal has been criticized in numerous editorials in western Canadian newspapers, by western Canadian editorial writers, and by people who have been heavily involved in the agriculture sector.

Mr. Andre: The *Edmonton Journal* was the only western newspaper.

Mr. Taylor: I have quite a few here and I am prepared to read every one, if the House will indulge me. For example, the Canadian Wheat Board has an elected advisory committee. It is meant to provide advice to the Canadian Wheat Board to help its operations. That committee met and clearly discussed the implications of the Free Trade Agreement and the legislation on agriculture and on the Wheat Board. That committee strongly recommended that the Government not proceed with the agriculture sections of the free trade legislation, and that the Canadian Wheat Board was definitely in jeopardy as a result of the provisions included in this legislation. As a result, we strongly urge that changes be made in that one context alone.

The Saskatchewan Wheat Board delegates put forward a motion to support the proposed Canada—U.S. Free Trade Agreement, but in August withdrew that support because they had no assurances from the Government that the integrity of the Wheat Board as a sole marketing agent for Canadian wheat, oats, and barley would be protected.

We have lost the two-price system of wheat as a result of the deal. We have lost the freight rate on canola moving West. One plant has been lost in the City of Lloydminster. A canola crushing plant in the City of Lloydminster has announced that it will be closing. That is a direct result of the free trade deal. We in western Canada are finding that the implications of this deal on agriculture and on our economy are too great to support.

I urge that the House think strongly about the implications of this legislation, and about the implications of what it means to the future of the strongest economy that we have in western Canada. I urge Members to defeat the Bill in front of us. Let us return to the drawing board and put together some reasonable alternatives to trade fairly with the United States.

Mr. Soetens: Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to have the opportunity to address the House. I wish to thank the