

commodities for the next several years. The Canadian Treasury is very inadequate to cope with the Treasury in Washington or the European Economic Community.

I travelled across the country during the last several months with the National Liberal Task Force on Agriculture. No issue was of greater concern in any province, and especially in the Province of Ontario, than the prospect of a comprehensive free trade agreement with the United States. The American system of marketing, support and assistance of agricultural commodities is at great variance with the Canadian marketing system. Many countries around the world would like to have the marketing system which we have for dairy products, fluid milk, industrial milk products, eggs, turkey and broilers. Yet, our marketing systems could certainly be put into jeopardy if we enter into a comprehensive trade agreement with the United States. There has been much concern because it is not clear where the Government stands on this issue.

In response to a question which I asked him in the House on January 23, the Secretary of State of External Affairs (Mr. Clark) indicated that our marketing boards and stabilization programs would not be on the negotiating table. It is interesting that only two days later the Minister got a thorough tongue-lashing by the American administration in an article in *The Globe and Mail*. The article reads:

"First it was going to free trade, then it was free except for culture, then culture and provincial exclusions, and now it's agriculture," one senior Reagan administration official said yesterday. "We're not even talking yet, and Ottawa keeps changing the rules."

It is clear that the Minister of External Affairs was not reflecting the views of the Reagan administration. A couple of days later the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) indicated in an interview which was carried in the *Winnipeg Free Press* that in fact agricultural commodities, marketing boards, and so on would be on the negotiating table. There is grave concern about exactly what the government position is with regard to our marketing boards and stabilization programs. Through all of our difficulties with agriculture in this country, the supply management and marketing boards have been among our most successful mechanisms for marketing our farm commodities.

Nothing demonstrates the Government's approach to problems better than the commodity-based mortgage. On Budget night \$700 million at 6 per cent interest was announced for this purpose. It sounded exactly like what people wanted. When we got into it we found that the \$700 million was over two years and that it was not new money but \$700 million of loan money to replace \$700 million of existing loan money. We learned that the interest rate would probably be 13.5 per cent in most cases rather than 6 per cent. In any event, it has been described by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture as a "complex, risky and complicated farm mortgage system which should be withheld by the Government".

There are many examples that I wish I had time to present to the House this afternoon, but that is clearly not possible. There is a need for a greater commitment by the Government,

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not only in interest relief and in farmer-creditor arrangement legislation, but in research. The Budget for agriculture research has been cut by \$42 million. Yet, the Government is dribbling away \$10 million on a crazy scheme with a bunch of New York investors on Dreamstreet. Surely it is time for the Government to get its act together and provide the kind of stabilization assistance which agriculture in Canada needs and is entitled to, due to the importance, diversity, and advantages which this industry can provide for the country.

Mr. Sid Fraleigh (Lambton—Middlesex): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to participate in this debate. I look forward to it. First, I would like to commend my colleague, the Member for Algoma (Mr. Foster), for bringing this issue before the House. It offers rural Members a chance to debate and point out the issues facing agriculture today. Members representing rural ridings fully understand the agricultural problems of today. I believe it is our duty to impress upon our urban counterparts here in the House of Commons, and the urban population, the dire straits which agriculture faces.

At the outset, I would like to point out a misunderstanding on the part of the Member for Algoma. I understand that the leaders of every major farm group in the country were invited to the meeting in Vancouver. Every report of that meeting which I read indicated that it was an outstanding success and showed the Prime Minister's (Mr. Mulroney) commitment for agriculture.

The motion points out the broad waterfront of problems which face agriculture. I would like to take a minute or two of my time to list some of those. The Farm Debt Review Board was first announced in the February Budget by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson). Money was allotted for the establishment of Farm Debt Review Boards. At the same time there was a commitment to revise the bankruptcy laws. I suggest that the second part of that commitment may be as important as the first part. For too long farmers and fishermen have been treated somewhat differently than other businesses in this respect. It is time that the law was changed and farmers and fishermen placed in the same position as other businessmen.

• (1600)

The commitment in the Budget has since been backed up by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise), and then the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) when in Vancouver he committed this Parliament to bringing forward legislation which will allow farm debt review panels to be put in place, and legislation to change the bankruptcy laws.

I would like to take a minute to talk about some of the ramifications involved in those two changes. It is my feeling that the farm community wants to be heard. Those people in dire financial straits want to be heard by an independent body of their peers. It is my feeling that the debt review board will allow this to happen and I look forward to the upcoming legislation.