

Supply

• (1210)

There does not seem to be very much relationship between what they say when they are negotiating and what they really intend to do as far as trade is concerned with the States. In fact they told us very directly that the enhancement program was controlled by the Department of Commerce and that they did not have any control of it in trade, that they could not do anything about it.

What I have been trying to point out is that there is a considerable disaster looming in rural Canada in the agricultural community. That disaster is the cumulative effect of many of the policies of this government and its direction which is based on the supremacy of the market. In every example that I can give you, if the government has been forced to make a decision it has made that decision in favour of the free and open market. It has, in every case, sold the farmer short and said, "We have no responsibility for protecting you".

One of the biggest problems that we have in agriculture today is debt. If you wanted to sum up the problems of agriculture in a couple of words you could say "income" and "debt". If you do not have enough income, you cannot survive. But if you allow the debt to grow and grow, eventually you have a situation with which you cannot deal. Regardless of how you look at it, you cannot deal with security of income because the debt becomes too great. That is the situation we are facing in Canada today.

We have \$23 billion of debt across Canada in agriculture. The government has said, off and on, that it was going to do something about it. What has it done about it? On the prairies the financial institutions now hold 1.5 million acres of land. A large portion of that, about a third, is held by the Farm Credit Corporation. That is the direction we have gone in the solving of the debt. Instead of helping him the farmer out, foreclose.

Supply management was a strong security system. It gave to those farmers who were involved in it the secure income that they needed. But what is happening to supply management? In the future, the insecurity of income, along with debt, will eliminate a lot more of the marketing boards. If the Minister of Agriculture has his way and we get a second generation, as he calls them, of

marketing boards, you can be sure that that second generation marketing board will be based on the supremacy of the market and not on security for the farmer, because that is the basis under which this government has operated in the past.

We cannot isolate ourselves from the international market but we can be sure that we have some security. The free trade agreement allowed the U.S. to do those things which it thought was necessary to penetrate our market or to guarantee that our products would be cheaper when they came to the United States.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I regret that the member's time has expired. Questions or comments?

Mr. Walker: Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed listening to the comments of the hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt. I would like to ask a question but before I do that I would like to make a comment about the general trend on the prairies, which I am sure he recognizes, and that is the trend of the federal government to pull support away from the transformation of western Canada. We are all very saddened by the decline in the family farm and the decline of farm income. But we also must recognize that the federal government has a real role to play in enhancing life in the west through other measures.

For example, last week I attended a conference in Brandon on rural development. Speaker after speaker talked about the lack of initiative in the Western Diversification Fund on issues of community planning. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the structure of the current federal government has the minister responsible for grains, which is a very important commodity in the western economy, also being the minister responsible for western diversification. It is a great surprise to westerners that more money is not forthcoming from western diversification to assist small communities in planning alternate futures. Certainly the attendance at the conference of over 300 people indicates that there is a desire among western Canadians to approach their problems differently. One would only hope that the federal government would see its way to changing its style.

Perhaps I could ask the hon. member who has just spoken on behalf of his party whether he, in fact, in concluding his speech, did endorse our motion, or was seeking a different way of approaching this.