

*Supply*

**Mr. Stackhouse:** Madam Speaker, it is a great honour to offer this intervention following one of the greatest Ministers of Agriculture this country has ever known, and one of the greatest debaters this House of Commons has ever known.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Stackhouse:** Madam Speaker, we do not usually expect Members from Metropolitan Toronto to participate in an agricultural debate. In doing so, the point I make is that while I do not represent many farmers, I represent a large number of consumers of farm products. The health of the farming sector of our society is vitally important to all Canadians, whether we live on the farm or in the cities. In my constituency we have the largest producer of flour-based products in this country. Government policies affecting wheat and flour are of vital importance to that company and the 400 people working in it. I am very grateful to and very impressed by this Government for the balanced way it handled the wheat pricing issue. It cares about the concerns of the wheat producer. It cares for the concerns of the consumers. It cares for the concerns of the people in industry. It has brought all that together to meet the legitimate needs and aspirations of us all. That is an example of what the Hon. Member for Qu'Appelle—Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton) was talking about when he said it is a matter of trust. Surely this is a Government in which we can have confidence because it cares about all segments of our society. It approaches policy issues with balance and justice for all.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne):** Resuming debate.

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry):** Madam Speaker, let me start with the issue of trust raised by the Hon. Member for Qu'Appelle—Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton). He has a long and distinguished career and surely he recognizes that trust is based upon a return of that trust. When confidence is placed in a Government there is an expectation that it will result in effective and useful action on behalf of the people who gave that trust.

In 1984, the Conservative Government received a huge majority. A great deal of hope was placed in the Government by western Canadian farmers. They had great expectations. I would just remind the Hon. Member of what has happened since then. In the prairie provinces, long a bastion of Conservative support, the Conservatives are in third place. In a short two-year period they have lost the trust and confidence of western Canadians. They have not fulfilled the hopes and expectations placed in them by those people. There is no doubt that the trust was there.

The whole point of this motion is to remind members of the Conservative caucus that it is about time they started acting as representatives of the people who elected them. They are not here simply to lash themselves to the mast of a sinking ship and obey orders. This is a time of conscience for members of the Conservative caucus who represent rural constituencies. They know what is going on. They know they are losing the

trust of the people and they are doing so because they are not responding to circumstances.

• (1750)

Let me give you some examples, Madam Speaker. Last Friday night I was being driven to Toronto from the Lambton—Middlesex area of southwestern Ontario by two farmers in order to catch my plane to Winnipeg. These farmers were from families who had been in business for three or four generations. They were good farmers, not marginal by any means. For two and a half hours I listened to their story. Day by day, week by week, they would see their neighbours down the road slowly packing what was remaining of their household goods into pick-up trucks to move off the land and recognizing that there was no one out there to give them a helping hand. There were not only one or two examples; they were by the tens of hundreds in that part of southwestern Ontario. These farmers said that it broke their hearts to see their communities dissolving in front of their eyes.

Let me also talk about another example. About two weeks ago I was meeting with people in my Winnipeg constituency office. Suddenly a group of seven or eight persons came in. They said that they did not have an appointment but that they wanted to speak to the Member of Parliament. They were from the Interlake area of Manitoba, Beausejour, to be exact. They had had a meeting the night before, and they said that they had only one choice and that was to leave the land. Their sons and daughters no longer had faith or hope in farming because there was no longer money to be made. These men and women were in their late fifties. They told the same story as that of the farmers in southwestern Ontario. They had lost hope, trust, and confidence. As a result, a way of life or a way of making a living was disappearing around them.

Last week I met with delegates of the Agricultural Stability Action Committee of southern Alberta representing some 20,000 farmers in that part of the country. It was the same story. They coined a new phrase for me. I had not heard it before. It was called "minding the farm". This means that what farmers are planning to do this year in many parts of Canada is simply to put in a minimum amount of seed to qualify for their acreage payment, get their government stabilization cheque, and walk off the land. That story is being repeated across the country.

It is not a matter of the resolution simply saying that we want to put forward our policies. In the resolution we are trying to get both sides of the House of Commons to respond to the deepest crisis faced by the agricultural community in generations and in decades. We are watching the dissolution of the grain economy of Canada. Farmers and their wives and children do not want the smug complacency we have heard this afternoon, indicating that things are okay, that we do not have to take action, that nothing needs to be responded to, that we do not need to worry, that it will be okay tomorrow, and that the market will take care of it. They do not want those kinds of