

Supply

at the expense of prairie farmers. That is what western Canadian farmers want. That is what they were expecting in 1984. They knew they were not going to get it, and that is why many did not vote for this Tory bunch in 1988. I would suspect that in the next federal election there will hardly be a Tory in western Canada left.

Mr. Terry Clifford (London—Middlesex): Mr. Speaker, I am certainly interested in the debate, representing farmers in southwestern Ontario. Indeed, the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle has visited London—Middlesex in his flights from Saskatchewan.

Is the hon. member in favour of the \$500 million being spent by the federal government right away? He seems to be in favour of it. I cannot understand why he is not in favour of the GST, particularly in his province. It will save Canadian farmers \$250 million. His own province is a major exporter of agriculture with 70 per cent of its product being exported. There is an expected gain with the GST of 2 per cent in the economy of Saskatchewan. I do not understand where he is coming from.

If the hon. member wants the \$500 million, why does he not want the farmers of Canada to benefit directly from the \$250 million?

Mr. de Jong: Mr. Speaker, I have some difficulty connecting the \$500 million, that has been promised and that we are still waiting for as an interim measure needed to allow the farmers to put the crop in this spring, and the goods and services tax.

The hon. member claims that the farmers are going to save some \$200 million. Certainly, I would like to see those figures. Much of what the farmer now buys is exempt from the federal sales tax. If he assumed that the farmers were paying tax and they are going to get a rebate, those are new sets of figures. That does not jibe.

The farmer does not pay all that much in actual sales tax on farm input costs, other than the tax on gasoline for which he used to get a rebate. The government now is cutting back on the rebates. When the goods and services tax comes in, the farmer will get the full rebate back. That is playing political games.

The government has increased the tax. Two years later it will give it back and say: "Aren't we nice fellows?" That will not wash back home. Farmers are not that dumb.

They will see through that number quickly. What the farmers want are commitments right now.

The government knew that western agriculture was in trouble in terms of the cash flow to pay for the input costs necessary to put the seed in the ground. It knew about that last fall. Certainly at Christmas, the figures were out. The projections were out. The government should have sat down and spent January and February with the premiers of Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba devising a program, having it out, and playing the political games. By the beginning of March, they should have announced a program.

Instead, we have seen the government waiting until the crisis hit. Now it is busy working and trying to find a solution. By the time it finds a solution, spring seeding time is over. All we have had is sound and fury from the Tories in Regina and Ottawa. There is nothing substantial in the hands of the farmers that would allow them to put their crops in this year.

Mr. Larry Schneider (Regina—Wascana): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the emotional rhetoric of the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, dealing with the very serious matter before us, namely, the cash flow problem that currently faces Canadian agriculture.

I heard the hon. member mention the word "betrayed". He said that he felt Saskatchewan farmers were betrayed. If I quote from a document which was prepared by *AgDecision* in May 1990, which is the United Grain Growers prairie crop report, it shows that as of May 7, which is early in the wheat planting year, in Saskatchewan wheat plantings are estimated to be up some 3 per cent.

I ask myself the question that if farmers feel betrayed, why are they investing more in the system? I question that comment as being nothing more than just emotional rhetoric and lacking in substance.

The hon. member went on to say that the NDP would have programs that would strengthen and help farmers. Mr. Speaker, for your information, the NDP did have a program that removed the burden of debt from the shoulders of Saskatchewan farmers. It was a very effective one. It learned from a political philosophy from across the Atlantic Ocean, which meant that it incorporated a land banking system in the province of Saskatchewan.