

*Supply*

I address a question to him about the grape farmers in the Niagara Peninsula who this year have had to rip up thousands—I repeat, thousands—of hectares of vineyards, all because of this free trade deal that this minister is lauding. I would like to know what answer he has for the farmers in the Niagara Peninsula who have had to rip up these vineyards.

The minister said in his speech that the free trade deal was not perfect. I would beg to differ with him. I think it is perfect. I think it is perfectly asinine.

**Mr. Mayer:** Mr. Speaker, I was not lauding or being critical of the situation in Japan. First of all, I was pointing out what the actual situation was in Japan. There really is no comparison between Canada's capacity to feed itself based on a very large land mass and a population of 25 million or 26 million people and a country like Japan with a very limited amount of land available and 120 million or 130 million people. There is no comparison.

• (1250)

The point I was making is that if we as Canadian farmers are to have better access to that market, we are going to be able to sell a lot more product to them. We regularly sell them a little over 1.5 million tonnes of wheat per year. It is very restricted how much we can sell to them because they protect their domestic market. If we are going to have trade that is even both ways, and the Japanese want to have access to other markets but want to protect certain markets at home, then some of those things in my view are going to have to change. I think the Japanese themselves have realized that and are prepared to address that to a certain extent in the present GATT round.

With regard to the situation in the Niagara Peninsula, he is not totally accurate. Some of the problems the vineyards have are also to do with the GATT. He should also know that in the free trade agreement there are some very significant provisions on the horticultural industry concerning some fresh fruits and vegetables. There is a very quick snapback, as it is called, so that if prices over a five-day period vary a great amount from previous prices, there is a provision that we can snap back to a duty to protect that. That is something that the Americans and we have agreed to.

We should remember that are the problems that the Niagara Peninsula is having with grapes is not 100 per cent attributable to the free trade agreement. The big part is with GATT. We do have some significant exceptions to the over-all reduction of tariffs over a 10-year period in the soft fruit and vegetable industry to protect the areas that he talked about.

**Mr. Funk:** Mr. Speaker, I noted your previous admonishment about being in the wrong seat. I guess I find it hard to separate myself that far from the previous member for Prince Albert who is a very good friend of mine.

I would like to take up the challenge that the minister left with us. I think he is listening to different voices from what I am hearing and other opposition members are hearing from the farm community. I am wondering if he has even heard the voices from his own convention.

Nevertheless, he did leave the challenge for the Opposition to come up with some alternatives. I will mention two that the government rejected. One was to use a crop insurance based drought program, which I think he might even now concede might well have solved a lot of the problems which many of us are still experiencing in dealing with that program.

Second, just last week or the week before the hon. member for Mackenzie rose with a Private Member's Bill which in principle asked the government and all members here to endorse the concept of including farm-fed grain under stabilization which although the government members said was a good idea they opposed. There were two alternatives.

I would like to ask specifically about a third one. The minister did speak about the situation concerning oats. He must remember that most major farm organizations and 70 per cent of farmers opposed taking oats out of the Wheat Board and were certainly happy to see value added activity. I think that could have happened under the Wheat Board.

Nevertheless, I would like to ask the minister this question. He indicated that 70 per cent of canola is exported. Canola is a major market. The Canadian Wheat Board is our major guarantee for access to the international market. It has worked well for years. Is the minister prepared to put the question in a plebiscite to farmers, yes or no, as to whether farmers in the Wheat Board area want canola under the Wheat Board. If he is not for some reason, would he be prepared to accept the results of such a plebiscite if organized by a major farm organization or farm organizations in western Canada?