

Obviously we are concerned about this. I met with the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool this morning and we had a good discussion on it.

As the Prime Minister said, to be quite frank about it, this government has provided \$21.7 billion worth of federal assistance to the farmers of Canada in the last five years. We stood with the farmers then. We are standing with them now, and we will stand with them in the future.

**Ms. McLaughlin:** Mr. Speaker, this party makes no apology for standing up for fairness and pay equity for people making \$18,000 a year in the federal hospitals.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. McLaughlin:** Agriculture Canada estimates that one in ten Canadian farmers and one in three farmers on the prairies are in danger of going bankrupt. I think those figures speak for themselves.

This will devastate rural Canada. It will destroy the farms and it will destroy the rural communities.

Is the government going to sit back and wait until we see the collapse of the prairie economy, just as we are seeing with the Atlantic economy? Will this government put a moratorium now on farm debt or offer direct financial assistance to prairie farmers so they can keep going and put in their next crop this year?

**Mr. Mazankowski:** Mr. Speaker, obviously the leader of the New Democratic Party had her question written out and failed to listen to the answer that I provided.

I might suggest to her that when it comes to moving grain, you cannot have it both ways. You cannot pretend to stand for the farmers and then defend the interests of the union leaders at the same time. She will learn that in a short time, I am sure.

The fact of the matter is that what has been discussed over the last two days was a very serious discussion about the future of agriculture. There were some very serious policy deliberations. There were 1,800 people from across Canada representing the total ambit of the agriculture industry. We sat down to try to project and propose new solutions and new policies for the future.

Of course the interim difficulty with respect to the collapse of grain prices and the corresponding reduction in farm incomes is a matter that is under serious consideration. I can assure the hon. member that this party has always concerned itself with the interests of the

farmer. It is concerning itself with the interests of the farmer today.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. McLaughlin:** Mr. Speaker, this government seems to think that the laws of the market place should apply only to farmers, not to banks. High interest rates and a strong Canadian dollar have dramatically reduced farm income to levels below what they were in the 1930s. When will this government finally let interest rates and the Canadian dollar go down?

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I believe that in 1988, farm income reached record levels in several parts of the country, both in Quebec and Saskatchewan. This was largely thanks to frequent intervention by the federal government, which has always helped Canadian farmers. The proof is that during the past two days we have had a very interesting national conference or congress on future challenges to agriculture at the international level. Considering the importance of this congress, I think the leadership of the New Democratic Party will have every reason to congratulate the Minister of Agriculture, first for his generous treatment of farmers and also for what the future will bring. I remember, because I was here when the Conservative government intervened quite dramatically to help western farmers, that the New Democrats objected, as they do to measures that benefit farmers in Quebec.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

## FISHERIES

**Mr. George S. Baker (Gander—Grand Falls):** Mr. Speaker, if there is one point that all fishermen and fish plant workers agree upon on the east coast of Canada it is that the codfish have got smaller in recent years and that this government should not be issuing licences to foreign countries or agreeing with foreign allocations to catch squid and capelin, which is the food stock of the codfish off the east coast of Canada.

I want to ask the Minister of Fisheries this. Why did this Minister of Fisheries, when he knew by a scientific report recently that the weight of a seven year old codfish in Newfoundland had gone down 50 per cent, or close to it, in the last 10 years, and in Nova Scotia more than 50 per cent, agree to these enormous foreign allocations for squid around threes and fours, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, for 1990 and an increase in