

Government Orders

member and he was quoting some figures in his comment about assistance to agriculture. I do not recall them exactly, but I believe he indicated it was \$1.1 billion in 1984 and \$1.6 billion projected for 1991.

I am sure he has used accurate figures, but I also know that the assistance to the agricultural community in Canada in the last five years has exceeded \$20 billion. I think the hon. member would want to acknowledge that that is a vastly different number than the numbers he was quoting. I am sure he would want to give credit for the assistance that has been given.

Unfortunately, there have been situations around the world with the subsidies that are going on in Europe that have put the industry in such a perilous plight that the government has had to provide that support. Ideally, we would not have had it. But I am sure the hon. member will want to acknowledge that there has been very significant assistance to the agricultural community over the last five years.

Mr. Foster: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Cariboo—Chilcotin has talked about the significant assistance to agriculture in 1987 and 1988. The argument that I am trying to put to him is that we are in the worst part of the world trade war of any time since 1986–1987 when it first started, and the government, for whatever reason, has dramatically reduced support programs in western Canada last year from \$2.4 billion to \$1.2 billion this year. This is a 50 per cent reduction. That is very different from the 600 per cent increase that the Prime Minister was talking about.

At a time when we should be going with all our armament to the GATT negotiations, in fact we are going with our producers totally disarmed. Programs have been slashed since the 1988–1989 budget. We would be totally snookered if we have reduced our support programs from a high in 1987 of \$3.3 billion down to \$1.5 billion next year. Assuming that the GATT negotiations continue in January, that would be the base year and we would be talking about a 30 per cent reduction using that new base year. All the figures that have been put before the GATT negotiations are based on 1987–1988 which were peak years.

We saw the Minister for International Trade buffooning in the House and complaining to the Minister of Agriculture that he was supporting \$8.8 billion, when producers know that the net support this year was \$1.9 billion, that the government plans to reduce it in 1991 to \$1.5 billion. It is going down and down at a time when commodity prices are the lowest in history in real terms. The markets are very thin and skimpy.

Mr. Ross Reid (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief on this topic. It is one that, quite clearly, a lot of members have a lot of concern over and is quite complex, involving not only the international monetary organizations but the groups that report to them and do work for them and also the complexities of international trade, as we have seen laterally with the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and the ongoing discussions that are held around the world in dealing with trade.

It is important that we recognize that trade is an important component on what we, the north, the west, the developed world, or the First World can do collectively to assist those nations that need our help as they emerge and begin to be able to develop economies that bring stability and added value into the countries where, in the past, we have been so quick to remove merely resources and put nothing back.

These are countries that traditionally we have not turned our focus to to see that contributions can be made, not only in terms of money, but also in terms of advice and substance to turn economies around, to help develop industry, and to help governments be able to provide even the most meagre services. It is important that we recognize that the agencies that do that, be it the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund, be able to provide those resources and that advice, and be able to provide parameters in which economies can work as we put money into them, based on some solid but flexible business sense, and real live approaches to the problems that are there.

It is an ongoing question and one that the House, over the next number of years, will debate, I am sure. At this time, however, I would like to move:

That the question be now put.