

Supply

Before I get into my remarks, I would like to say that yesterday I had the opportunity to be down in southern Manitoba in around the Emerson and Selkirk areas. The farmers are really working down there. They are in the fields, doing their best. There are tractors all over the place, cultivators are going and everybody is moving quite well.

They had dry conditions yesterday but it is completely opposite today. It is raining. Farmers refer to a million dollar rain, but in the Brandon-Souris area in southern Manitoba, I think we can hopefully call it a billion dollar rain.

There have been a number of comments made today in debate. Some I agree with and some I do not. I think it is important that I remind everybody that the government has been responsive to the various needs of the agricultural community.

Back in 1986-87, we put \$2 billion into the agricultural industry via the Special Canadian Grains Program. Also in 1988, we went into the Canadian Drought Assistance Program which was good for \$850 million.

Mr. Crawford: A real screw-up!

Mr. Bjornson: At least we tried. It was an effort. Not everything is perfect. You know the agricultural industry. You will know the magnitude of the farmers that requested aid. I think the minister did a fine job of putting this program together as best as he could in the timeframe that was involved. It was not for lack of trying. Any criticism like that is unacceptable on this side of the House.

Right now we have \$500 million on the table that we want to put into the agricultural industry. The government is doing the best it can, and \$450 million of that is directed towards the grains and oilseeds. It is important that everybody understand that we do want to participate.

Throughout the debate so far today, there has been a lot of comments made about international trade. I would like to address my comments to the fact that Canadian agriculture, the grain industry in particular, is very much influenced by international trade.

Canadian farmers have been forced to watch the giants of the international grain trade, the United States and the European Community, beat each other with their wallets, driving down world prices and seriously eroding traditional grain markets.

At the same time, the huge subsidies paid by the European Community continues to encourage overproduction by the farmers. To protect the European grain industry, the community leaders have thrown up tariffs which effectively shut out our opportunity to get into their markets. We have a significant problem over there. The United States and the European Community have bigger wallets than we have.

We are doing our darndest to support the farmers. We have been doing this by working in GATT. There has been an obvious effort. Probably one of the most obvious efforts was put forward by the Minister for International Trade when he said that we should stop dealing with the past and look to the future. We are trying to deal with the problems of the future.

Once again, it is unfortunate that the Americans in particular said: "No, no we might have to fight with you fellows". Because of their influence, the size of their markets and their wallet, they have said they will stop. So we are back in there and we are trying to be optimistic by dealing with the future and not with the past. The past is done. We are still paying for the past and we are going to do what we can, but we want to make sure that we have a futuristic plan. We have to give the Minister for International Trade credit for some very strong efforts.

There is a lot of inequity caused by the subsidy practice of the Europeans. These examples that I am going to give are based on prices in April, and are in Canadian dollars. At that time, EC producers received \$243 a tonne for wheat, while the Canadian farmers received \$145 a tonne. Look at the difference. EC farmers received \$353 a tonne for their Durum, while the Canadian farmers only received \$130. In the case of barley, the EC farmer received \$232 a tonne, while Canadians were only getting \$97. That is a significant problem.

The Europeans and the Americans eventually have to come to their senses. It is not the agricultural community. The agricultural community in the European countries and in the American states well understand that their survival right now depends on those fat wallets. But what about the consumers, the taxpayers of those countries? When are they going to change? We have to work towards educating those people.