

Supply

When that happens, farmers who live 200 or 300 miles from the American border who cannot haul their grain across are going to complain that they are not getting the pooling price they were getting before because some Canadian farmers who are close to the border are hauling grain across the border. There is then going to be a call to remove the whole Wheat Board.

That is a viable and possible scenario. The free trade agreement would have allowed that to happen this year and it came very close to happening this year. It is going to happen in the future. That is in keeping with the government's lack of commitment to orderly marketing in this country. This is a real scenario.

Mr. Benno Friesen (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to ask the member if he is against Canadian grain farmers exporting their grain to the United States. Do you want to pick and choose and markets you ship to?

I notice that the motion says: "That this House recognize that Canadian farmers face dire financial circumstances" for a number of different reasons. It seems to pretend that nothing has happened since this government came to office, that there has been no attention paid to farmers.

I would like to point out to the member that between the years 1985 and 1988 this government paid out about \$3 billion in western grain stabilization payments. In 1987 it paid \$1 billion in special grains; in 1988 it paid \$1.1 billion; and in 1989 it paid \$850 million in drought assistance, which is one of the things to which he is asking us to pay attention. In five years the government has paid out about \$6 billion to the grain farmers in western Canada, not counting all the other farmers.

Would it not have been a slight measure of honesty to have put something on the record or in the motion recognizing that this government has, over the past five years, recognized some of the problems that western farmers have faced and given credit for the \$6 billion that it has already invested in western farmers?

Mr. Laporte: Mr. Speaker, that was two questions. With respect to the question of marketing grain in the United States, the New Democratic Party is not opposed to farmers selling grain to the United States, but we

would like to see it go through the Canadian Wheat Board. When it goes through the Wheat Board, through the pooling system, we believe that the farmer, over all, gets a better price for his or her grain. When the farmer sells it independently, the large American grain companies are able to pick them off. That is pure and simple.

We want to see a strong, viable Canadian Wheat Board marketing grain in the United States and throughout the world. The poll that was done last year indicates that so do about 80 per cent of the producers in western Canada.

With respect to the payments made by the Tory government of the last few years, what the member said is true. If the member had been listening to my comments, he would know that I did make note of that. I did say that this government has put billions of dollars into the agricultural economy, but it has been misappropriated; it has been misdirected.

• (1540)

That money could have been used much more wisely and much more efficiently if this government would have been committed to maintaining the family farm instead of throwing money out at election time, which it does. In fact, the \$850 million came out 10 days before the last election. Ten days before the election the government was scrambling around for an announcement on grain. It knew it was going to lose seats in the west, and it did lose quite a few, but it came out with a \$850 million announcement of a drought aid program. It did not have a clue where the money was going to go, it just knew it had \$850 million, \$45 an acre.

The point is that the government has put money into agriculture, yes, but it could have done it more wisely and more efficiently if it had the commitment of maintaining family farms and maintaining a viable rural economy and a viable rural infrastructure.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions and comments are now terminated. On a point of order, the hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie.

Mr. Butland: Mr. Speaker, I think we should point out that the hon. member who asked the question of my colleague did not stick around to hear the answer to the question.