

we allow the support programs to take their natural course of support. I would like to ask my colleague to please respond to that.

Mr. Vanclief: Mr. Speaker, I would be pleased to respond to that.

I think, without question, that requirement of that transitional payment is absolutely necessary. I recognize that during this time we are in a bad deficit situation as a country. Even in those situations there are emergencies, whether it is in our personal life or in our business. We are at a real crisis. I have farmed all my life and we are in a crisis such as we have never seen before.

The agriculture community went through a shake-down in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, part of which I went through. It was said then that we will shake it down. There will be some fall-out. The inefficient will fall out and what is left will be our efficient farmers and we will go on from there.

We are going through a worse shake-down than that. We are tearing families and homes apart. We as a House of Commons, as a Parliament and Canada as a country need now to make that decision. It is a very simple question. Is agriculture and food security, and I could go on and on, important to Canada or is it not? To me the answer to that is very simple. It definitely is, not only in the short term but in the long term. If we do not keep that industry and all the spin-offs through manufacturing et cetera that is involved with it, it will not be here for our children and our grandchildren.

This government and all governments like to talk about what we are going to do for our children and our grandchildren. I maintain, and I speak very strongly on this, this is one thing we had better do for those who follow us, maintain this industry.

Mr. Joe McGuire (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank my colleague from Prince Edward—Hastings for sharing his time with me this afternoon.

I am happy that the House of Commons has set aside the time to address one of the most important issues facing our country, the farm financial crisis. The crisis is not exclusive to the prairie provinces or to Ontario and Quebec. It also includes the maritimes in most sectors in the industry. It is a national crisis. It affects farmers in the agri-food industry right across this whole country.

Supply

There is a great deal of uncertainty in the dairy industry, one of our most stable sectors, because of the GATT negotiations and the rumours that have been emanating from Geneva. I hope that the mandate given to our negotiators is an inflexible one. Article XI of GATT must be protected and extended. The retention of Article XI is paramount if we are to keep our supply managed commodities, which guarantee at least the cost of production for the farmers involved in these commodities.

I urge the government to hold fast to the position of retaining and strengthening Article XI. It would be a sad day for Canada if our dairy industry was reduced to the chaotic state that the American dairy industry is, where bankruptcy is a very common occurrence.

I want to address my main remarks to the unfolding tragedy of the potato industry in Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick and especially in Prince Edward Island where potatoes have been the cornerstone of our economy since the colonial days.

P.E.I. basically has two wealth-generating resources, agriculture and fisheries. The health of these two industries is vital to our whole economy. We have no mining in Prince Edward Island. We have no rivers large enough to harness hydroelectricity and no gas and oil deposits. Agriculture is the industry which is most vital to P.E.I. and our table and seed potato industry is the most important sector of that industry.

We have long enjoyed a world-wide reputation for our seed and table potatoes. Our seed is in demand in Europe and South America, in Africa and Mexico, the United States and the rest of Canada. Potatoes growing from P.E.I. seed out-produced seed from any other source in the world, including Holland, the next most important source of seed. The potato industry has been an industry which has competed in a world market for many years virtually on its own.

If you are looking for an example of an agricultural commodity which is operated in a free-market system, the capitalist, international, non-subsidized milieu, you will find it in P.E.I. seed and table potato industry. Rarely, and only in times of world over-production and two-cent a pound potatoes, have Prince Edward Island producers looked for government assistance in order to survive.