

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S. O. 81—AGRICULTURE

**Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie)** moved:

That this House condemns the government for reneging on its commitment to Canadian farmers by changing policy in the following areas:

- (a) its lack of commitment to the Third Line of Defence concept;
- (b) its abandonment of the 95-year old promise to pay the Crow transportation benefit in perpetuity;
- (c) its weakening of the Canadian Wheat Board by several actions: removing oats from its jurisdiction, considering a continental market for barley, and the lack of control on quotas as witnessed by the December 23, 1992 action of removing quotas on canola and flaxseed in the middle of the crop year and ultimately creating problems in the primary elevator system;
- (d) its failure to develop long-term agricultural programs that meet the needs of rural Canada by promoting viable farm families and rural communities; and
- (e) its failure to provide clear and unequivocal support for our supply management system, particularly with respect to the mixed signals the government is giving with respect to its position on the strengthening and clarification of article XI of the GATT.

He said: Mr. Speaker, in keeping with the rules of the House I will be sharing my time today with the member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre. This will be a 10-minute intervention.

Essentially we are calling on the government to look at five areas of their agricultural program. Initially their apparent abandonment of the third line of defence concept is something to which we think attention should be drawn.

Farm incomes in the grain sector are very low. Since the beginning of the grain wars initiated by the Americans with their export enhancement program, which had the effect of pulling all export pricing for grains down everywhere in the world except to American farmers, the result has been devastating for Canadian farm families.

We did not have particularly strong incomes in the early 1980s. Already pressure was being placed on farm families, but the result of the grain wars has meant a

### Supply

deficit in their total income of \$6.7 billion since their advent in 1985. In Saskatchewan this translates to close to \$20,000 per family on an annual basis and that is a lot of money.

The government initiated three lines of defence. The first line of defence was things that farmers could do on their farms and farmers have done a great deal on their farms. They have reduced costs, they have diversified to other crops that might bring a higher price, they have diversified out of crops altogether and into grass, hay and the production of cattle. They have done what is humanly possible.

The second line of defence was to be government programs that would back up the farmers and defend them against international price competition that was considered to be unwarranted. In this we can see quite clearly the government has not been able to fully manage that with the programs that were put forward, the so-called GRIP and NISA programs of 1991-92.

If there is any doubt about that, all one has to do is go out to the prairies right now and talk to farmers. They were so upset about the lack of income resulting from the first GRIP program that a huge rally was held in Saskatoon in the past week with some 13,000 farmers in attendance. This was the biggest farm rally that ever occurred in the prairies. Previous large rallies in the sixties when there was a relatively short period of pain came to 9,000 or 10,000 persons. At that time there were more farmers to rally to the cause as well.

If we need further evidence other than the pain being felt by prairie farmers in the amount of bankruptcies they are going through, you need only spend some time in a rural community as I do all the time. I live there. We see people restructuring, trying to find ways of financing to stay in business for another year. They sell off assets, they downsize, they try to get rid of debt. After three or four years many of them are having to do the same thing again and make decisions whether to stay in farming or not. This puts a lot of financial pressure as well as human tragedy in rural communities. At the rally we were told that suicides in rural Saskatchewan have gone up tremendously, into the hundreds. The source of this is the economic crisis that puts social pressures on people.