

Supply

cent by 1985. We have a number of valuable research projects that could start if we got additional funds.

There has been a lot of talk about Canada's natural resources of late, having to do with energy. But what about the energy source, food, that fuels the human body? It, too, is a renewable resource, supplied by a great force in this country, namely, the Canadian farmer.

In this House we must never underestimate the importance of agriculture to the economy, history, culture and national unity of this great country, Canada. It is in that spirit that I come before you today requesting your support for Agriculture Canada's programs so that we may continue to lend our whole-hearted support to those who supply this nation and the world with the life-giving resource of food.

Mr. Wise: Mr. Chairman, I hoped that in the minister's statement he would have answered some of the questions which I have in mind. Unfortunately, he chose to deal in general terms with the activities of the department and the industry. I am positive that we will demonstrate today and tomorrow that bringing the Minister of Agriculture's estimates before the House is to again draw to the attention of the House and Canadians the absolute necessity of maintaining the agricultural industry's health, strength, and vitality.

I am certain that during the course of this session we will be able to illustrate in numerous areas that the government has ignored many of the serious problems facing the agricultural community.

Agriculture, in our government, was at the centre of decision-making. If you look at the record during that short period of time we were in office, it would be very difficult to challenge that statement. The record will demonstrate that we delivered on our promises and we fulfilled our commitments. In contrast, the industry under this government more often than not simply receives lip service, brief bursts of attention and indications of action, actions which seldom, if ever, materialize or develop.

When we assumed office the department and the industry were still reeling from the cuts delivered unilaterally in August, 1978, by the Prime Minister's office. Within our brief term of office we reinstated those programs and restored the funding. For example, we added person years to the inspection branch and we added some \$13 million to the research division.

I am sure you would agree, Mr. Chairman, that that is support, not neglect. But let us look at the record of this government. Shortly after the February election this minister made a commitment to do something about the problem of high interest rates. He made that commitment here in Ottawa before 1,000 farmers. I had the opportunity to attend that meeting. I expect the Minister of Agriculture supported his cabinet colleagues regarding support to the home owners and regarding support to Chrysler Corporation. On numerous occasions when the minister was speaking in western Canada he has said that if he had his way he would financially support Massey-Ferguson. Now that we have interest rates reaching

almost those same levels they were at a year ago, what does the minister have in mind for special assistance and help to farmers? He will have another opportunity to deliver on the promise made last spring to the farmers here in Ottawa.

Second, the minister made a commitment on behalf of the government to raise valuation day values to December 31, 1974, levels. That was a campaign commitment. I have a copy of his campaign literature. He made that statement time and time again. We, of course, would support that. I remind the minister that our budget last December dealt quite appropriately with the subject of capital gains. The minister voted against that proposal. I could forgive the minister if he would match our provision, but after two opportunities he has not delivered anything. That is obviously neglect, not support. My second question would be, when can we expect the minister to match our commitment with reference to capital gains?

● (1540)

I will move on to the third area and deal with his commitments respecting the Farm Credit Corporation. Here the minister made two promises or commitments. The first was to enlarge the corporation, and the second to maintain the interest rate advantage. These are commendable commitments. There is no question about that. Again the record reveals no additional funding has been secured for the Farm Credit Corporation. Second, he raised the interest rate to 13 per cent, the highest level on record in the 50 or 51 years history of the Farm Credit Corporation.

We increased funding by some \$50 million. In addition, we prepared legislation for the corporation to seek additional funds from non-government sources. I would like to know the status of the legislation and if the minister can provide matching funds as we did a year ago.

Fourth, the minister indicated that all fuels used in the on farm production and delivery of food would receive some cushion. That is not my word, it is directly from the national Liberal campaign commitment. The document indicated that these fuels would receive some cushion to shield them from the effects of accelerating energy prices. What did we get? Instead of the cushion promised, the agricultural and food industry got the axe from the minister. Instead we got an energy policy which will double the cost of farm fuels in two years and quadruple farm prices in five years. To make matters worse, our security of supply and self-sufficiency has been severely threatened. In fact it was not until last week that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources placed farm fuels for some production in the top priority.

Fifth, what has happened to the minister's agriculture export corporation, a Crown corporation promised by the Prime Minister in western Canada in April, 1979, almost two years ago? We have supported the need for such a structure since 1974. While we were in office the necessary cabinet document had been prepared. What has happened? Has someone canned Canagrex? On the subject of export sales, we were always concerned about the number of agricultural sales people in our embassies and consular offices around the world.