

Supply

with him that day—and said: “Len, all I see is wheat, wheat and wheat”. It is true that has been my life.

There is no higher calling than producing food. If you want to look at the international situation today, there is a lot of talk about rights. Rights for this and rights for that. Minority groups are talking about rights at every level. Certainly there is not a more important right than the right to eat. If you are going to eat, the farmers have to produce food. I do not know of any better place to produce food and grain than in the prairies of Canada that God has blessed us with. They can and will produce food.

We must strengthen agriculture and build it up if we are to survive as a strong nation. We must build it up if the world is to benefit from the food farmers produce. I strongly believe we must make food a priority at the G-7 level. The leadership must come from there to deal with the world banks, the international situation and so on.

What about storing food for the long term? We know what has happened in Russia. The whole infrastructure has broken down. The ability to produce food has broken down. This must not happen in Canada. It will not happen under a Conservative government and Conservative leadership which has given historical leadership to agriculture. You ask those prairie farmers out there. Talk to them one on one as I have.

• (1100)

They know a government that has stood with them through thick and thin.

Mr. Harvard: That isn't what they said at the rally.

Mr. Gustafson: I was at the rally. I heard them boo the premier of Saskatchewan. I saw our Minister of Agriculture stand and make a declaration and give the message to farmers that we were there to listen, as they know we have been.

This situation that exists in Saskatchewan is interesting. For months the former Minister of Agriculture kept going back to the province and saying: “We will leave the door open for you. Don't scuttle the national program”. He said that again and again. How many times did he say that on TV and in this House? Yet the NDP in Saskatchewan decided to move ahead in its own way and not go along with the national program.

I am a strong believer that we do need some strong programs to see the farmers over the difficult times. They have been put in place, imperfect as they may be. On my farm when it costs me \$35 an acre that is not bankable because of the direction of a provincial government that would not go along with the national program, it is pretty serious. That is a pretty important third line of defence to me. It was put in place and must be reconsidered.

We know that the NDP did better in the northern part of the province than in the south. I do not know whether it was to penalize those who might have a drought as we do in the south. The old Assiniboia riding, which is now part of the Swift Current riding and part of the Souris—Moose Mountain riding, produces more grain than the rest of the province put together.

Mr. Althouse: Come on. Maybe wheat.

Mr. Gustafson: Wheat and saleable products that go into the international market.

The other point that I want to make is that the provincial government obviously thought there could not be a frost. That was an unfortunate situation. The frost came and we have wheat that is weighing 62 pounds a bushel, if frozen. On the other hand, we have some that is weighing 52 pounds and it is black. You would wonder whether the cows would even eat it.

Had they not disturbed the program—

Mr. Althouse: That's a crop insurance program that wasn't touched.

Mr. Gustafson: The crop insurance program and GRIP were programs that were working together and would work together for the benefit of those who bought the insurance.

Because of the interference of the NDP in the provincial program, many farmers opted out of it. The percentage of farmers going into the program in Ontario was up considerably, somewhere around 85 per cent. The percentages in Manitoba were up considerably. The percentages in Alberta were up considerably. In Saskatchewan, because of the unrest created by the provincial NDP government, many farmers opted out. They now find themselves in a very difficult position.