

The issue of outstanding wheat and barley rights with respect to the European Community is also a top priority. My officials and I will continue to work with the Europeans, as will representatives of international trade, to seek adequate compensation for our historic GATT rights with respect to high quality wheat and barley in Europe.

Another key priority will be to develop new whole farm safety net programs for the future. In two weeks time I will be meeting with provincial and industry representatives in Winnipeg to start work on the future of safety nets in agriculture in Canada. In my view we need a safety net system that meets the basic needs of all agricultural sectors and does not distort market signals, one that lets farmers make sound decisions based on comparative advantage and not based on government programs. Money is tight. We cannot afford a patchwork of ineffective programs. However I believe we can afford a safety net system that works, and that is what we will all be working toward.

Even as we strive to reduce expenditures I intend to place increased emphasis on agricultural research. Good research is not a frill to be cast aside in tough times. It is fundamental to make Canada a world agricultural and agri-food leader. In our platform, the famous red book, we talked about the importance of research and the need to increase joint venture funding. Since we do not have a lot of money I will be looking for ways within my own department of reallocating priorities so that we can continue to move forward on research despite the necessities of budgetary restraint.

I believe the federal government can play a leading role in innovative research and development, for example in biotechnology which has a very strong reputation in my province and other exciting new areas like ethanol.

However R and D spending cannot just be turned on and off like a tap. Inadequate and inconsistent support for research has already resulted, in my judgment, in some missed opportunities.

• (1030)

We must effectively bring together the drive and dynamism of individuals and entrepreneurship with the brain power and strength of our universities and research labs. If we do that effectively the combination can be very powerful for Canada and very powerful in the field of agriculture.

As I conclude I recall that 90 years ago this week Sir Wilfrid Laurier declared that Canada would fill the 20th century. It has become fashionable to compare today's reality with Sir Wilfrid's sentiment and to say that he was wrong.

However when we consider carefully what Canadians have achieved in this century, a country with one of the highest standards of living in the world, a country with a peaceful

### *The Address*

democratic society, a country that is the envy of people everywhere, maybe Sir Wilfrid was not so far off the mark after all.

Over the next four years we will have the opportunity to show that the 20th century did indeed belong to Canada. We will have the opportunity to make history, to restore the faith of Canadians in themselves and in their country, and to prepare Canadians for the next century with the same confidence they had at the start of this one.

This government is looking forward to meeting that challenge.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean H. Leroux (Shefford):** Madam Speaker, first I would like to thank the hon. member for Regina—Wascana for the speech he made in this House. He stressed the importance of his department and, as the Official Opposition's deputy critic for agriculture and agri-food, I would like to voice the concerns of my constituents in the riding of Shefford. There are many farmers in my riding, and today they are very worried.

Last December, I attended the UPA convention in Quebec, and I must say farmers in Quebec and Ontario are extremely concerned about what is happening as a result of GATT and NAFTA. Chicken, dairy and egg producers are very worried, as their future seems very uncertain.

I think the minister made it clear in this House that he intended to expand the role of the Department of Agriculture. Madam Speaker, you know as well as I do that agriculture has never been an important department when the Liberals are in power. However, we hope that this time, after the minister's eloquent speech, agriculture will receive more emphasis, since in Quebec more than 350,000 people depend on agriculture and the agri-food sector. As the minister said so eloquently, this is an area where we can develop markets and an area in which we can compete internationally thanks to the quality of our products. I would therefore urge the minister to stay his course.

We in the opposition intend to monitor very carefully the decisions that will be made by this government. If it does it right, it can be sure that on behalf of all farmers in Shefford, Quebec and Canada, we will support those decisions.

[English]

**Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie):** Madam Speaker, I wish to congratulate the Minister of Agriculture on his first speech in this session of the Commons.

During his speech he was discussing GATT and the marvelous solution that we have signed in that accord. He mentioned the new rules and that "rules will apply equally to all countries". Yet in the GATT we appear to have signed away our rights under article XI which protected our supply managed industries. The Americans appear to have maintained their waiver under article XXII which retains their ability to keep out dairy products, peanuts, cotton, sugar, et cetera. In spite of the rules allegedly applying equally to all countries, we still have a