

grains. It is the envy of producers all over the world. The Australians have one; they like ours better. I had the opportunity over the Thanksgiving weekend to talk to farmers in the mid-western United States. The first comment you most often get from the American farmer is how we have developed such a successful wheat board and what might they have to do politically to get something like it.

If this government were serious about international markets, and it should be, it should be not only maintaining the current role of the Canadian Wheat Board but it should be enhancing the role, moving it into new areas. When you have a winner you go with it. This government makes a big point of going with the winners. Maybe the losers have to lose, but certainly you go with the winners. Our big winner is the Canadian Wheat Board.

This morning I challenged the minister to hold a plebiscite. I am not suggesting anything that is not democratic or that the majority of farmers are not interested in. I think it is time to hold a plebiscite on whether farmers want rapeseed or canola included under the Canadian Wheat Board.

• (1610)

I might remind our Liberal colleagues here, some of whom might not have been around in those days, that we at one time had such a plebiscite. However, Otto Lang, the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board at that time, had a personal prejudice against it, put in a convoluted question with yes, no, maybe, don't know, which needed 50 per cent of the vote. There was no way in that kind of a stacked ballot to get any proper reading.

I challenged the Minister of State for Grains and Oilseeds to organize a plebiscite in the Canadian Wheat Board area on whether Canadian farmers in fact want canola marketed under the Canadian Wheat Board. I challenge this government to stand by the results of that plebiscite because if it is really serious about using our best possible vehicles for international trade, then it has to take the Canadian Wheat Board seriously. It has to make that vehicle available before canola disappears as a profitable crop in Canada as well.

Supply

I would like to say that when it comes to the whole range of agricultural policies which the government is proposing I note that in a few weeks we are expecting a White Paper from the Minister of Agriculture in which again we will see the same general thrust.

The government talks about self-reliance. It talks about market orientation. What that means is making us much more vulnerable to the ravages of the international market. That is what pits our small producers and our small industries against the international giants. At the same time, rather than strengthening the Canadian Wheat Board and the marketing board system, which have worked very well for us and which are world models, this government should make it clear once and for all that it has gone as far as it is going to go in dismantling those structures and that in fact it is going to get together with the Canadian farm community to help enhance those vehicles.

Certainly nobody on this side of the House has ever said that we do not need export markets in agriculture. We do. We are asking for this government to take the actions that will in fact help farmers, not help Cargill, not help Continental—

An Hon. Member: We need to make our agriculture more competitive, right?

Mr. Funk: We have a member from Manitoba who says we need to make our agriculture more competitive. We certainly do. We are not going to do that by cutting our farmers off at the knees.

Mr. Foster: Mr. Speaker, I was very interested in the comments of the hon. member from Saskatchewan. I thought he might have listened very closely to the comments made by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister. He was talking about the great record sale of Durum wheat. It reminded me of the speech that the Deputy Prime Minister made last week to the Canadian Grains Council in which he said he was "deeply concerned and deeply annoyed by the recent actions by the United States that run counter to the spirit of the trade agreement". He went on to say: "The American Durum growers are wrong to complain continually about our exports of Durum for pasta and noodles. They are wrong to threaten countervail action."