

time to engage in extravagant expenditures and end up with a accumulated deficit of \$226 billion, as we now have. We cannot be expected, Mr. Speaker, and I think it is important, to introduce programs here and there and everywhere. We must be good managers. This is why the youth have elected us last September 4. They have made a harsh judgment on the previous Government, and they told us: We have trusted you, go and put your house in order, and that is what we have been doing since September, Mr. Speaker. It is not an easy task and it will take some time. We need the confidence of the people, as well as the good will of all parties, including the Official Opposition and the New Democratic Party. Given the circumstances, Mr. Speaker, I think that we are now in a position, after eight months in office, to present an interesting picture to the people that shows how seriously we have taken the fiscal problems of the Government.

Mr. Speaker: Questions or comments. Debate. The Hon. Member for Kamloops-Shuswap.

● (1730)

[English]

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops-Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak in support of the principle of this motion. I have listened carefully to speeches by Hon. Members today. I think it is fair to say that in the past Liberals have accomplished some good things for agriculture, although I could not find too many examples.

Mr. Nickerson: Name one.

Mr. Riis: Surely if one is in power for 40 years something good must take place sometime, somewhere and somehow. While I am unable clearly to identify any, indeed there have been some rather minor assistance packages for the farm sector.

Let me open my remarks by referring to what has happened in my constituency in the last three weeks. I come from a constituency where agriculture plays a very major role. There are 1,200 full-time farms and a number of part-time and hobby farms.

I notice that the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Beatty) is in the House. We are still awaiting for that clarification with respect to how the tax system affects part time farmers. That clarification was promised before the election, during the election and after the election—it has been eight months. I simply want to flag that for the Minister in the hope that we will have that clarification in the near future with respect to how the tax system affects this critical area.

Three weeks ago I spoke to a sheep rancher in my constituency. He is from a large sheep farm that has operated for three generations. His grandfather had settled in the area and commenced a large sheep operation. He took over this operation from his father and I believe his son will look forward to taking over this family operation. I say this merely to point out that this case does not involve an overnight introduction of

sheep ranching into the area but indeed an operation that has lasted for three generations.

This distraught sheep rancher came to me to say that the production costs of raising sheep on his ranch were far higher than the prices he was receiving for his animals. In short, he was saying that it is no longer profitable to run a sheep ranch in central British Columbia, no matter what the size of the ranch. Furthermore, he was using the most modern methods and sophisticated management techniques. He suggested that three generations of sheep ranching was about to end unless the federal Government could assist him. He asked if I believed that the federal Government could assist him by implementing measures to assist the farm sector in a real way. I am always honest with my constituents and therefore had to answer no. While I hope the federal Government would do so, it was my honest opinion, based on information I had at the time, that it likely would not. Of course, this was not encouraging to my constituent.

Later that week I talked to some 40 cattlemen in my constituency. They also told me that their cost of producing cattle was higher than the prices they were receiving and therefore they could not continue any longer. It is impossible in a cattle ranching area of western Canada to continue such an operation, despite the most modern equipment and sophisticated management techniques. These are very learned food producers who simply cannot continue without some support from the Government.

They told me that they had heard of a proposed red meat stabilization bill and asked if such a bill would solve the problem. I said that it would not solve the problem because if such a bill were passed the price that beef producers would obtain would be an average of the prices which I have just stated are too low to cover the costs.

Until the Government recognizes the value of the family farm in agriculture and that those people must obtain a fair price that is reflected in the cost of their operation, we will not have family farm operations in Canada. It will be replaced by agri-business and corporations. A very efficient way of food production will be removed from the agricultural landscape of Canada.

I met another individual in my riding who, along with others, was introducing a rabbit operation; they would raise rabbits, slaughter and sell them. He asked me if there was any federal support for such a venture and I advised him that he could receive assistance through the IRDP. He indicated that those running the IRDP were not interested in supporting such a venture. They did not have any faith in this type of food production and would not provide assistance. This is another clear signal that people in my constituency are receiving from the federal Government.

I was also approached by a number of people who were becoming involved in the potato producing sector. They had approached the federal Government for assistance in developing a processing storage facility. They were simply asking for assistance to begin operations and were quite prepared to repay the loan. However, when they made their inquiries to the