

Government Orders

Finally, it does nothing of any substance toward the reduction of the debt. It is laughable. What is the saving, \$27 million or \$28 million? If the government would drop the interest rate one percentage point, it would save ten times that amount. This is absolutely ridiculous. We are creating havoc within a vital sector of our economy to save an amount of money that is almost insignificant.

I notice the Speaker is signalling time. I will close with this final comment. I urge the government to reconsider this bill. Family farms have built Canada. I hope that you are not the people that destroy them.

Mr. Crawford: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member for clarification. He mentioned vegetables, especially pertaining to red beets, carrots and tomatoes. Would he please clarify the advance payments and the interest paid on those crops?

• (1610)

Mr. Karpoff: I am afraid I cannot give details as to what the advance payments were on specific crops such as beans. I know that in British Columbia, with the vegetable marketing co-ops, the advance payment is a significant part of the cash flow. In dollar terms I know that the total amount of borrowing is \$11 billion, but in terms of the total borrowings with the bill the amount went from about \$35 million in 1957-58 to \$330 million in 1980-81, and up to \$563 million in the last crop year. I do not have before me the breakdown by agricultural section.

I know that in all of the various farming communities it is not the total amount, it is what it means to the individual farmer. Whether a very, very large farmer borrows \$10,000 or \$20,000 with interest or interest free is insignificant. But to a lot of our family farmers the ability to borrow \$30,000 interest free is of exceptional significance.

So while I cannot give details by agricultural section as to the amounts of the advances, I know that individual farmers, whether they be a market gardener, a farmer in Ontario growing grain or corn, or a farmer in Alberta, the ability to borrow money plays a significant part in his ability to keep operating.

Mr. Harvard: Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of us in this country who see a disturbing pattern, and this particular bill, we believe, is a part of that pattern. The pattern that we see shutdowns at VIA Rail, the shutdown of post offices, cuts in the crop insurance program, cuts in

regional development, and we could go on and on. There is this disturbing pattern.

The previous speaker alluded to the supply management system that we have in this country. I think he is concerned that the Conservative government will ultimately cripple the supply management system. I happen to believe that it is in peril because of government policy.

But there is something else, and this is the question I have for my hon. friend for British Columbia. I sort of smell a rat and I smell it from the point of view of the free trade agreement. The free trade agreement reminds one of harmonization and the level playing field, those types of things. Why would the government deliberately get rid of this program, at least the interest free portion of it which is a subsidy of a kind? It is not very expensive, only about \$27 million. Why would the government eliminate this particular feature of the program just before it begins some serious subsidy negotiations with the Americans? I would like to ask my hon. friend whether he sees a pattern there with respect to the FTA.

Mr. Karpoff: I think that there is no doubt that the free trade agreement permeates every move that the government makes. And yes, there are concerns that the free trade agreement, directly and indirectly, is going to attack our marketing boards and our management systems. I do not understand why at this time but the information I have American program to reduce or offset their equivalents in the 1989-90 year.

It seems that not only are we saying to the Americans that we will give them a level playing field but, if necessary because of the free trade agreement, we will give them more than a level playing field, we will give them an advantage. I think that that is what will seriously hurt us in the long run in Canada.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I want to comment on this bill and in particular to try to enlighten the Minister of Employment and Immigration, although it is virtually an impossible task to undertake, but I am always prepared to try for miracles, particularly for someone who is totally and completely abysmally ignorant about what is taking place in western Canada and conditions that pertain there.

Nevertheless, the House of Commons is a place where one must valiantly try his best to open up the closed minds that have been so dominant opposite. I think we all have read in our textbooks at one time or another about Chinese water torture, where drip by drip you wear down resistance, drip by drip you wear down the opposition to the point where they yell "surrender".