

take it for granted that all of these matters are the subject of discussions between the federal minister and his provincial counterparts. They are all the subject of policy considerations by the Government of Canada.

With regard to the general commitments made in the Speech from the Throne, my answer must be that further information, elaboration and explanation will come when specific announcements are made by the ministers responsible.

**Hon. Hazen Argue:** Honourable senators, before asking a supplementary question, I wish to congratulate the leader on his appointment to cabinet. We got along nicely with his predecessor. I hope that that goodwill will continue; in fact, I am sure it will. Senator Murray conducted himself as chairman of the Senate Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce in a commendable manner. I have confidence he will do exactly the same in the position he now holds in the cabinet and in the Senate.

My question is this: Can the Leader of the Government in the Senate hold out any hope to western farmers that in the near future the government will bring forward a program of deficiency payments for the grain producers? There was no mention of western farmers in the Speech from the Throne; I do not believe there was any mention of them, in any event. I am glad that the Leader of the Government mentioned western farmers.

There has been a major let down in western Canada because of the words used in the Speech from the Throne. There is a feeling that the Speech is so imprecise and nebulous that it really constitutes a declaration that there will not be deficiency payments announced in the near future. I would appreciate the leader's comments in that regard.

Bearing in mind his position in cabinet, I think it is important that he tell us where the government stands. I think he can be helpful in moving these things forward.

**Senator Murray:** I thank Senator Argue and Senator Olson for their kind words of congratulations to me on my appointment to the cabinet.

Honourable senators, Speeches from the Throne are framed in terms of more general commitments. I must say that I find it difficult to understand why the honourable senator would not have recognized in the Speech from the Throne what I call a very clear signal on the part of the government to western farmers and to our international competition—that is, that the government intends to stand behind western farmers in their efforts to confront unfair international competition.

As to how that will be done, when that will be done and what programs will be brought to bear, I am afraid my friend will have to be patient and wait for specific announcements from the responsible ministers.

**Senator Argue:** Those words are almost as nebulous, if I may say so, as those contained in the Speech from the Throne. There is a suggestion that steps will be taken to "alleviate personal hardship," and "my government will spare no effort in seeking to protect the interests of Canada's farming community." Does that mean there will be more speeches in the

international arena? Is that what that means, or is there a possibility—at least a possibility—that there will be an announcement of major deficiency payments in the near future?

The Deputy Premier of Saskatchewan took the same flight I took to Ottawa. He was in Ottawa on Tuesday. The words contained in the Speech from the Throne indicate that he had precious little influence on the government. While it may or may not be known that he was in Ottawa, the Deputy Premier of Saskatchewan, the Honourable E. A. Berntson, had only one thing on his mind, politics, which is perfectly proper, because there is an election to take place in Saskatchewan. I know he is sincere in wanting deficiency payments announced in the very near future; I also know he is as disappointed as western farmers are because of the lack of action by the government.

**Senator Murray:** Honourable senators, I am sorry that Senator Argue did not see fit to preface his comments with some reference to the action that this government has already taken to improve the stabilization payments and to help farmers who are in financial difficulties. The fact of the matter is that western farmers—prairie farmers—this year will have received over \$2 billion in transfer payments from the federal government. I tell the honourable senator that that is an increase in federal payments to western agriculture of over \$1.5 billion on the average that existed from 1981 to 1984. So, I think the government's previous action in this respect is the best indicator of the government's good faith and of its future intentions.

**Senator Argue:** Honourable senators, I am surprised that the Leader of the Government in the Senate would bring those figures forward and say that that was the action the government took. The government could not help but put that money in the farmers' pockets, because that money was provided by the Crop Insurance Act and the Western Grain Stabilization Act, both of which have been on the statute books for a long, long time.

During the past few weeks what has the government done? It has removed the PGRT and has given \$1.5 billion in tax revenue release and benefit to the big oil companies; 48 hours later the same government announced \$46 million would be dispensed to 9,000 farmers to assist them in getting off their farms. That constitutes less than 3 per cent, but that is for the purpose of getting farmers off their farms. I think that is a very bad record and a great disappointment.

I can tell the Leader of the Government something else about that program that really upsets me; that is, if a family leaves the farm and goes to the city, the husband will receive \$140 a week, the wife \$28 a week and each child \$14 a week. For a family of four or six, that is less money than they would receive on welfare.

Again, my question is: When is there going to be some action and when are the farmers going to get more than a slap in the face?