

farming and farm debt problems are concerned. So, really, I would be going over the same ground. In other words, I want to endorse what Senator Barootes said.

I must say, however, that the honourable senator has left out a couple of points that perhaps I should draw to the attention of the Senate. Senator Barootes talked about the improvement in the farm debt situation. One thing he ought to have said after he had talked about there being some improvement, although I think he got around to saying it a little later on, is the fact that most of the improvement is because of write-offs and restructuring. In other words, the farmers did not have an opportunity to pay back any of that debt, so whatever improvement there is because the creditors, whoever they were, wrote the debts off. That is exactly what the committee heard.

As I have said, there is no point in going over the issues again, but I have a great deal of apprehension about what will happen in 1990 and beyond. I attended the great conference held here in the middle of December, when the Minister of Agriculture introduced his green paper, "Growing Together". I have to say that what was in that paper in real, hard, specific, concrete proposals amounted to just about zero. Senator Barootes has said, as did the minister himself, the Honourable Don Mazankowski, in front of the conference, that "everything is on the table and we are here to discuss it." It is as if the government could not come up with a positive idea about what it wanted to do to solve these problems. The minister did not put forward one proposal. Senator Barootes will agree that he did not say, "This is the government's idea. This is the government's position, and this is what we are going to do." No, he said, "Everything is up for discussion." What a way to govern the country!

I know that the Minister of Finance has some problems in financing the deficit. I think most of the problems are self-inflicted, because the government is wedded to a Tory philosophy. I also believe that the government has copped out. Governing the country means that you look after the country, that you use the resources of the whole country to help those areas that are facing difficult times. When I talk about areas I am referring to economic sectors, geographical sectors and so on. Right now we have a problem on the Prairies, we have a problem in the fishery in the Atlantic provinces, and we have a problem in Prince Edward Island because of the closings by the biggest employer of that small province. Canadians should help each other and help the various areas when they face difficulty. That is what governing Canada is all about.

The government has backed off and said, "We're not going to do it any more. We're going to have a market economy, and if you can't live with the market, too bad," notwithstanding the fact that the United States and Europe are having a financial battle using their Treasuries to beat down prices, as Senator Barootes properly pointed out. That is not governing Canada, that is a cop-out by the Government of Canada.

I was in government long enough to learn that some of these decisions are difficult and to learn how much help you extend and under what terms and conditions you extend it. However, when you see people who are desperate and who face the

prospect of having their livelihoods, their economic base and their communities devastated by drought, by low prices in the case of farmers, and by lack of fish stocks for communities like Canso and other towns, it is the job of the federal government to get in there and devise plans and come up with ideas that will help those people over these rough spots. In a country as big as Canada redistribution of resources is a primary function of the federal government, and so are a few other areas, such as defence.

If the government backs off in these times, the people of Canada will remember it. I realize that the Tories now believe that they are in a terrible position, that they will lose all the seats they have in Atlantic Canada unless the fish come back. Given the management they are providing at the present time, it does not appear that they will come back. All the programs mentioned by Senator Barootes that were put in place to help the prairie grain farmers were good ones. I do not take any of that away from the government. However, I have to say that the vehicles or programs used for the funding were, to a large extent, in place before the Tories came to office in 1984.

Senator Barootes: What programs?

Senator Olson: The Crop Insurance Program, the Western Grain Stabilization Fund, to mention but two. The government has destroyed these programs and spent all the money that was in them. All those programs were in place and ready to operate. I know that during one or two years the government added money to those programs, but now it has backed off to the point where there is nothing left. Not one payment, not one cent will be paid out under the Western Grain Stabilization Fund this year in spite of the fact that all of the conditions that brought about such payments are still present.

The Minister of Finance is in difficulty so he cannot pay any more. Why? This is another failure of the government.

I wish Senator Flynn were here today, because I know what his response would be to what I am about to say.

Senator Phillips: You should have told him and perhaps he would have come back.

Senator Olson: Yes, I should have notified him of what I was going to talk about, because he once reminded me that I used to be in the Social Credit Party.

Senator Doody: What? Would you repeat that?

Senator Olson: Honourable senators, why are we having such great difficulty with government financing? Why does the government not deal with the real issue? The real issue is that since this government has taken office the debt service charges on the national debt have more than doubled. It is partly because the government has borrowed as much money since 1984 as all previous federal governments had borrowed in the history of Canada. That is one thing, but since then interest rates have been raised by about 3.5 per cent or 4 per cent. In my view, there is no need for that. I am no great economist, but I do know that the interest rate is 3.5 per cent above the rate in the United States today. In Canada the prime interest rate today is 13.5 per cent. That is what the