

and only propose amendments after consultation with the producer organizations.

Of course, in the implementation of its agenda, the government has never shown much interest in seeking the input of those Canadians who will be most affected by the measures. From a finance committee that considered originally only going to two cities in Atlantic Canada and a Minister of Transport who refused to meet with municipal officials, this government obviously does not want to hear what Canadians have to say.

The Minister of Agriculture and his colleagues are turning a deaf ear to all of the producer organizations coast to coast that oppose this bill. This government's arrogance is stunning and will not be forgotten by farmers and other Canadians.

I find it appalling that the government will go forward at this time with this bill when farmers and producers so greatly need money at this time of year. They need their credit line and then be able to go to the banks when they have to borrow more money to keep their operations afloat.

This could not come at a worst time for Canadian farmers, when they are fighting all the effects and the impacts of the free trade agreement and the threat to their marketing policies. Again I would urge this government to go back to these organizations and negotiate a bill that will be much more beneficial. I ask it to keep this program intact, certainly for this year as has been recommended by all these producer organizations.

**Mr. Geoff Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to participate in this debate.

I think the essence of what we are trying to do here is put in place the amendments to the Advance Payments for Crops Act and also the Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act.

What I am hearing from producers is that over-all they feel the government is on the right track in trying to deal with the debt and deficit problems which, after all, is the fundamental problem affecting the country right now. The interest charges on that debt would curtail the activities of any government. I say that not in any partisan way because it would not matter which party was in charge here. The size of the national debt and the interest charges that have to be paid on it are, without a

doubt, a formidable obstacle and, in essence, shackle the abilities of government to be able to continue to deliver the programs we have now, let alone to improve upon them.

I think that producers across Canada understand the problem and the dilemma that faces the government. I think they understand also that the answer to the problem is not just to raise taxes, but that there also have to be some reductions in government spending.

In the recent budget, there were reductions. Every department of the government was asked to make some contribution to deal with the deficit problem. Of course, it is natural that each and every one of those proposals would be opposed by the opposition because that is their job, and by various groups affected in the country.

The fact is that most people across the country understand that these things have to be done. There is no great desire on the part of the government to inflict pain or hurt. The problem is that unless the deficit is addressed in some meaningful fashion at this time, we will soon reach the point where all of the revenue of government is taken up in interest charges, in servicing the debt of the past. Clearly, that cannot continue very long.

In regard to the amendments to these bills, the essence of them is this: That farmers will still be able—

**Mr. Milliken:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia):** —to obtain financing to carry their crops from harvest time to delivery.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands on a point of order.

**Mr. Milliken:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member who is speaking is clearly making an intelligent speech, but there is not a single minister of the Crown in this House to hear it. We are on a closure motion. This is a government bill. There should be a minister here.

• (1240)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** The hon. member knows that he should not indicate who is and who is not in the chamber. We have a lobby. We have television sets here in the House.

**Mr. Gauthier:** Where are they?