

Government Orders

During the excellent discourse of my hon. colleague I heard some members across the way heckling. There were insinuations about what an urban member was doing talking about agriculture.

I think all members from both sides of the House should spend more time concentrating on agriculture because it is not just the business of those of us who live in rural areas. I want to congratulate him for taking that initiative.

There is a lesson here that all members of the House should learn. It is to become knowledgeable in agriculture, as my colleague has just obviously demonstrated, judging by the excellent speech that he made. Perhaps other members representing urban areas can do that as well.

I also recognize that my colleague has a keen interest in agricultural issues because of certain holdings and because of his many acquaintances in rural areas. I am particularly glad to see that as well.

I want to ask my colleague about another issue in agriculture. It concerns the general malaise that farmers are seeing vis-à-vis the threat to their supply management systems for the dairy industry principally and, of course, the poultry producers as well.

My colleague will know that the government has signed a free trade deal with the Americans and has made certain promises primarily to the agricultural sector, whereby it would be protected from imports, particularly in area of ice cream and yogurt. The Government of Canada made a unilateral statement in that regard, and that as such, it was in fact the law, knowing of course that there is no such arrangement.

When the government then tried to impose its ruling unilaterally, placing ice cream on the import control list, the Americans appealed to the GATT and won a first round decision, only to find that the Canadian government caved in afterwards.

Does my colleague agree with me that the Canadian dairy farmers need to have their supply management system strengthened and protected by a government which cares about supply management the way the previous Liberal government did? Does he agree with me as well that the government across the way has been caving in to the Americans and failing to support supply

management as it should, both with the United States and at the GATT?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The hon. member for Broadview—Greenwood on a very short reply.

Mr. Mills: Yes, Mr. Speaker, it will be a very short reply. Of course I support my colleague, but I want to add that my constituents are demanding that we become knowledgeable about agricultural matters. A group of them worked with one of the agricultural associations over the last two weeks and our next householder is devoted specifically to agricultural issues, because the basic problem we have is that this government is decentralizing to a point where it is hard to develop a national consensus and a national will.

It is only when everyone in the community becomes involved in these problem areas that we can begin to galvanize the country. That is where you get support and that is the only way the agricultural community of Canada is going to get the support that it needs.

Mr. Joe McGuire (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak today on Bill C-48.

Once again the government is persisting in off-loading federal costs to the provinces with this bill. In the past two budgets it has become very evident that off-loading is the main objective of this government. It is as if the people who pay the federal taxes are different from people who pay provincial taxes. It is as if we are talking about two different countries, not two different jurisdictions.

• (1730)

If Bill C-48 is passed, the federal government says it will save \$200 million. Taxpayers will not save \$200 million. They will pay the same as before, or more. All that is really happening is that a different jurisdiction will pay for the same program, with little or no improvement to the program.

The minister has claimed that all the provinces are agreeing to these new arrangements under Bill C-48. This is not true. British Columbia is not agreeing to this program, New Brunswick does not agree with this program and Prince Edward Island does not agree with the program changes. In fact, Prince Edward Island would be better off under the old program than under these new regulations.

In the past the crop insurance program was cost shared fifty-fifty between the producers and the federal govern-