

Supply

● (1520)

I think this is instructive because the people know of the 338 promises that were made by the Government and of the dozens and dozens that have been broken or have not been responded to since the election of over a year ago. They have seen the House of Commons spend a great deal of time this fall debating a bail-out of \$1 billion or \$2 billion for banks because of the carelessness of the Government in dealing with that issue last March. They have seen PetroCan spending \$1 billion to set up additional gas stations. They have seen a billion dollar tax ruling to benefit one big industrial family in Toronto. What they want to know is why can the Government not respond to this industry, which is critical to Canada, not only in terms of those several hundred farmers but to the entire economy and to the rural life of our country.

In the recommendations which were made by the Leader of the Opposition he recommended that there be immediate action on an acreage payment for drought. He suggested \$50 per seeded acre, which has been recommended by the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. He recommended an income tax adjustment related to farmers who have to sell off their herd and want to be able to go back into the industry without having their revenues destroyed by income tax. He recommended a permanent long-term disaster relief mechanism in conjunction with the provinces. He recommended a debt review agency to reschedule debt and also provide long-term preferential interest rates for farmers. A sales tax exemption for farm fuels was promised by the Government in the last election campaign. It instituted a program last November in the economic statement but most of that elimination of excise tax was removed between May 1, when the exemption to the petroleum compensation charge was lifted because that charge was removed, and September 1 when a new excise tax of 9 cents a gallon or 2 cents a litre was imposed.

The Leader of the Opposition recommended that there be a public inquiry into the cost of chemicals and pesticides about which there was a great deal of concern. The Senate has done some work on that but there is a need for an impartial inquiry in that regard.

The Minister did respond to the question of what will happen to our marketing agencies and our support programs with free trade. I still have not seen an ironclad commitment that these will not be bargained away and I do not suppose that we are going to get such a commitment. Of course that adds to the uncertainty and concern that Canadian agriculture feels today.

I think in the debt crisis there is a very great concern in areas all the way across the country but particularly in areas like the Bruce Peninsula where hundreds of farmers have lost their farms in the last couple of years. The Government promised an agri-bond program. An agri-bond program was recommended by the Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs Committee, a program which would assist the farmers to—

Mr. Dick: What year?

Mr. Foster: In 1985. It was chaired by the Hon. Member for Mississauga South (Mr. Blenkarn).

Mr. Dick: It was also recommended when you people were in Government but you did not do anything about it.

Mr. Foster: It was an excellent recommendation with the majority of the people on that committee from the Government side providing a write-down of interest to 8 per cent, up to \$300,000, which was a five-year program. There was no response. I think that the Minister is very glib, very reassuring in what he has to say. However, when one reads the Budget one sees that there is only input cost increases and while there was a provision generally available to all Canadians and to farmers for capital gains exemption which helps farmers get out of farming, it does not help them stay in farming. There were increased input costs through the sales tax, through an excise tax, through removal of exemption of the petroleum compensation charge, and when one reads all the solid evidence, the Estimates, the Budget, these documents that show where decisions are made by the Government. There is no decision to give additional support or encouragement to agriculture. There is no decision on Section 38 because the Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs Committee studied that matter and put down a recommendation. In the Estimates the Farm Credit Corporation budget was reduced by almost \$400 million this year. The estimates of the Department of Agriculture—

Mr. Wise: Increased.

Mr. Foster: There will be \$50 million removed from it. As well, the Department of Agriculture will be deindexed and that will cost another \$10 million to \$15 million. We do not even know where that \$50 million and \$15 million is going to come from. Is it going to come out of the dairy program? Is it going to come out of agricultural support programs? Is it going to come out of transportation or is it going to come out of research? There is a pretty firm commitment by the Government to greater research in agriculture and yet there appears to be no certainty or commitment by the Minister yet where he is going to remove that \$50 million.

I was impressed with the Government's support to the oil industry. There was a reduction in taxes within three or four years of \$2.4 billion and an increase in the value of reserve by \$800 million. I was not impressed that there was that kind of commitment to agriculture. I am sure the Minister wants, and I hope that he will get, that kind of commitment from the Government because I think we are going to go through a very difficult time for the next couple of years. I think that Canadians want to see agriculture get the kind of commitment which other sectors of the economy, notably the petroleum industry, received in that Budget.

The Minister after his review placed a moratorium on 670 Farm Credit Corporation foreclosures which are in the pipeline now. There will probably be more by December 1 because that is when most of the payments come due. I am interested to know whether the Minister will be adopting a program like