

Government Orders

small business community. It is the centrepiece of this government's fiscal and economic policies.

Farmers in Saskatchewan are in a situation where there is a very good possibility that there will not be any net income for those farm families at all in the coming year. They will not have a single dollar to spend after the expenses have been paid, much like what has been described by the previous member in respect of fishermen in the maritimes. The expenses of farming will eat up every dollar of income that those farmers will get.

I did some checking in my own region, and the Prince Albert Farm Credit Corporation office reports that of its 2,900 accounts, 916 or 33 per cent are in arrears. That means that one third of the farmers cannot pay their bills. Certainly, low prices and other factors have been a contributing cause to that fact, but the high interest rates that have been paid over the last 10 years or so have also been a contributing factor.

It is very discouraging to the young people in that province who started farming in the last 15 years when they see real incomes and the prices of their products decline. At the same time, they see interest rates rise. Thirty per cent of the farmers right across the province are in that kind of situation. Those farmers are asking me: "Where is the money that has been promised by this government? When is it going to get there? Where is it going to come from?" This government has got itself into such a fiscal and economic mess that it cannot afford to pay any more.

Four months ago, the Minister of Agriculture said yes, there would be money to assist the prairie farmers fight the international grain wars and other problems that they were facing. Six weeks ago there was an announcement that there was \$500 million available and that the minister would be negotiating with the provinces in an attempt to up the ante on that. In fact at that time, he was demanding one-to-one dollars with those provincial treasuries.

That is a ridiculous proposition. The very provincial economies and provincial budgets that are being asked to share this money are the ones that are being negatively impacted. How can a treasury, such as the treasury of Saskatchewan, match a one-to-one dollar when its very tax revenues are dropping like a stone because of the crisis that it faces?

In Canada, the situation we are then left with is that our national government is the only government in the world that is asking its local level governments, in other words its state or provincial governments, to pick up the burden of fighting the international subsidy war which is driving prices down. The European Common Market, the United States and all our competitors are doing it at the national level.

The national governments are taking responsibility, as they should, for matters of international trade and for making sure that the bank accounts of individual farm families are not the ones competing in international grain wars with the treasuries of the European Common Market and the United States.

We have the total absurdity in the province of Saskatchewan where 23,000 people were forced to leave the province in the last year. They were faced with fiscal and economic policies that were designed to fight inflation in a few metropolitan areas such as Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. In our own province, and in many rural areas of Canada it is the people there who are fighting dis-inflation, de-inflation.

The net value of farms, homes and businesses is falling. There is no inflation at all. There is de-inflation. That is what people need to fight in those regions of the country, and the government's fiscal and economic policy takes no account of that.

The problem we got ourselves into stems from a fundamental change in the government's public, fiscal and monetary policy that occurred about 20 years ago. I think it can be honestly argued that both Liberal and Conservative governments have been equally culpable in making this massive shift in fiscal and economic policy.

The hon. member says that an NDP government would have also been responsible for making this shift in policy, if it had ever been elected.

I would like to remind the hon. member that the New Democratic Party governed my home province of Saskatchewan for 11 years, 1971 to 1982. During that period, through good times and bad times, that party managed to run a surplus budget in every budget year and managed to provide the citizens of Saskatchewan with some of the best programs seen anywhere in the country. There was great innovation in a wide variety of programs. At the same time, they managed to balance their books. I think that is an example of what you can do if you not only pay