

Government Orders

for or a farm advance provided for it. In the Ontario case, the government spent several months making up its mind whether it would provide this help for the 25,000 corn producers who are facing the worst cropping situation in history. Finally it came through with the \$15,000 limit rather than the \$50,000 limit which is available for threshed, harvested corn.

If the government is willing to provide a \$50,000 interest free cash advance for threshed or harvested corn, why would it lower that limit when farmers are facing the terrible situation of not being able to take off the crop? Yet that is exactly what happened. In the end, the whole thing floundered. I think there were only 20 producers out of 25,000 who were able to even take advantage of that program. It is a case of niggling and nickel and diming and fighting for every dollar that is needed even though the economic situation for many of these commodities was as bad last year and this year as it was in the 1930s.

• (1525)

We are glad the bill is going to be passed. We hope it will not take very long to be passed in the Senate, but the over-all situation is that the farm financial crisis being faced this year should be the priority for the government.

We know farmers are facing a \$1 billion reduction in net farm income. We know the government has chopped the estimates for the Department of Agriculture by over \$600 million. Producers really want to know why the parliamentary secretary cannot come into the House today and say the government knows the net farm income is going to be down dramatically this year. It knows there is going to be a general election some time this year, whether it is in the fall, summer or spring. The parliamentary secretary, who was so positive on third reading debate, cannot make a clear statement outlining exactly what additional financial support will be made available, not just for this bill but to help farmers face the perilous drop in net farm income which in Saskatchewan is simply a disaster. It is about a quarter of what the net farm income was four or five years ago.

If the government really wants to show its commitment to agriculture this would be the time to make that statement. I think the parliamentary secretary has seen

the tremendous devastation in the corn crops and the difficulties of harvesting that crop last fall. Much of it is still in the fields in southwestern Ontario. I really do not know why he would not move in and help.

Right now we not only face the fall-out from the grain trade or subsidy wars that are going on, but we face the tremendous uncertainty of the free trade deal. The NAFTA is even more uncertain now because we do not know whether the United States is going to accept it. There are also the GATT negotiations.

So much of that uncertainty goes back to the FTA itself. There are problems with the countervail duty that the Americans are trying to impose on our hog producers. There are problems we face with regard to durum wheat. Investigations have been carried out by the United States International Trade Commission with regard to beef production. So much goes back to the FTA. The Prime Minister went to New York and said that American trade law cannot apply to Canadian producers. Ask the hog producers who have had to pay a countervail duty off and on since 1985.

There is great uncertainty in all the sectors. I think there is greater uncertainty now in the supply management and marketing areas than there ever has been because the GATT negotiations have proceeded and stopped, proceeded and stopped, and at some stage you start to wonder if there ever will be a GATT agreement. Either way people in the supply managed sector are very uncertain of their future.

If there is a GATT agreement, clearly the Dunkel commission report which we are concerned this government will accept, will bring in tariffication. Ultimately that will open the borders and drive down the price of poultry products and dairy products. If there is no agreement, then we face the ice cream and yoghurt decision under the FTA. Clearly the government promised it was going to provide import controls. John Wise, the minister for agriculture at the time, stood in this House and said the government had no fears that producers would be protected. Commodities like ice cream, yoghurt and so on would simply be taken from the tariff lists and put on the import controls list. Clearly the government misled Canadian producers.