

*Government Orders*

How do we who represent farm interests in this House convince the government that its approach is wrong when it is not listening and cannot read the writing on the wall?

Bill C-48 is taking Canada in the wrong direction. The correct approach is to act internally to reduce interest rates, to institute an income stabilization program to ensure that farmers have an adequate income for their labours, to put in place an immediate \$500 million for Saskatchewan farmers to help cover the costs of the recent droughts and low grain prices, and to establish a moratorium on farm foreclosures at least until July 1, 1990 to ensure that a debt restructuring program can be designed and executed.

The Minister of Agriculture is aware that the agricultural debt in Saskatchewan alone is \$6 billion, half of which is held by federal and provincial government institutions. Unless that debt is restructured no amount of other assistance is going to alleviate the farm financial crisis before us.

Bill C-48 is an attempt to cloud the crisis, to fool farmers into thinking this government is acting on something. We in the Canadian farm population will not be fooled. At this time of great difficulty in the industry we need a government that is prepared to show leadership, a government that is prepared to see the industry through this difficulty without undue and unnecessary stress, and a government that is prepared to step in where necessary rather than a government that will remove itself from the process.

I will not support Bill C-48 and hope this government will reverse its direction so that farmers can do what they do best: farm the land and provide food for the world.

**Mr. Len Gustafson (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I have just one brief comment.

I listened very closely to the hon. member's remarks. He is not recommending that this is a good program. I want to recommend it to the farmers of Saskatchewan. I took a good look at this bill on the weekend with different farmers as it relates to their individual farms.

If the government pays 50 per cent of the coverage plus the administration cost, as it does on the crop insurance program, it is a good deal for the farmers. The

additional cost and coverage are very important. I am sure the hon. member is not suggesting to the farmers of Saskatchewan that they should not take this coverage, particularly when there are difficult problems for agriculture in Saskatchewan.

The government realizes the problem. That is why the amendments have been made and why this program is important. It is important to farmers to consider taking this program or coverage unless they are in good shape financially.

**Mr. Taylor:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman opposite has a great deal of experience in the farm community. I know that on occasion he represents his constituency extremely well. I do not doubt for a minute that he advocates the taking of this crop insurance by the farmers in his part of the province.

He will recognize that there are great discrepancies across the province of Saskatchewan in terms of the way in which the crop insurance schemes have been designed and the way in which they assist farmers on marginal land in the north versus the farmers in the southern part of the province. That is not what we are here to debate today.

I believe in crop insurance. I believe crop insurance is an essential part of the agricultural program. However, my argument, if the hon. member had listened, was quite clear, that no amount of tinkering with the crop insurance programs we have today is going to alleviate the farm crisis. Rather than debate this motion, we in this House have to try to find a way out of the farm crisis, to find a way to keep the farmers on the land, and not to try to fool them that we are doing something about it when in fact the big problem is still there.

**Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member from Saskatchewan. He has often served on the agriculture committee and I know he is aware of the difficulties facing Saskatchewan.

The recommendation made by a number of groups in Saskatchewan that there be an acreage payment of something like \$20 per acre with perhaps a lesser amount for summer fallow would be a kind of cash injection. The member was saying that we should not be tinkering with the system, that we need a cash injection at this time so farmers can put their crops in the ground this spring. I