

Supply

allowing people to go off the land? Why do we have farmers in southern Alberta talking about mining their farms? I do not think there is any dispute about the facts. I do not think anybody here has argued about the deep-seated conditions we are in.

Why are we going to disagree about the kinds of measures that can be brought forward to give some hope, confidence and trust that the Hon. Member for Qu'Appelle—Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton) asked for? We recognize it will cost money. As did my colleague, the Hon. Member for Algoma (Mr. Foster), we applauded when the Government announced the \$1 billion program. It was a good start. Farm groups said it was not enough, but it was of some assistance. That, however, was last year. We are talking about what is happening next year. We are talking about farmers now nearing the end of March, who are making their plans today as to what to do, whether to stay on the land, what they can seed or whether they will be in business three or four months from now.

Mr. Wise: They know more about it than you do, Lloyd.

Mr. Axworthy: I concede they do. But I must say to the Hon. Minister that I think they know more about it than he does.

Mr. Wise: I agree to that.

Mr. Axworthy: I have been listening to them, Madam Speaker. That is why I have been out in the countryside for the last two months talking to people in the farm economy in western Canada. That is why I was in southwestern Ontario last weekend. They told me to act as a vehicle for their point of view. They said they needed help and they need it now.

Mr. Wise: They will get it.

Mr. Axworthy: They need the assurances now.

Mr. Wise: They have the assurances.

Mr. Axworthy: That is all this resolution asks for. It does not say that the Minister of Agriculture has to say how much or whether it will be acreage, cultivated or resource-free; it simply says make the commitment now—

Mr. Wise: The commitment is made.

Mr. Axworthy: —rather than dancing away from that commitment.

Mr. Wise: The commitment is made.

Mr. Axworthy: The commitment is not made.

Mr. Wise: It is.

Mr. Axworthy: It is not out there.

Mr. Wise: Yes, it is.

Mr. Axworthy: If that is the case, it is the best kept secret in Canada. Farmers sure as hell don't know about it. No one out there knows about it. Perhaps the Minister of Agriculture and his colleagues know about it. If that is the case, let them say so.

Mr. Wise: You cannot say it now.

Mr. Axworthy: If that commitment is out there, then we have no problem. The Minister of Agriculture can get to his feet in two or three minutes and vote for this resolution. That is all it takes. We do not ask him to do any more than that. Just let him get to his feet and say yes to this resolution. Then there will be no mistake and no confusion. And we can say is that this House of Commons has done its job. It will give farmers a little hope. We will have shown that this Parliament of Canada is prepared to take some action when necessary. We can say that all Parties got together and took the action necessary.

If the Minister of Agriculture and his colleagues say that the commitment has been made and the assurances are there, then I say to them, get on your feet and vote for this resolution.

Mr. Wise: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think we have had other items on the agenda today. It has been a good debate. Could you seek unanimous consent not to see the clock to give the Hon. Member for Crowfoot (Mr. Malone) an opportunity to pose a question or two?

Mr. Gauthier: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): Is there unanimous consent for the Minister's suggestion?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Wise: Just one question?

Mr. Gauthier: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): We do not have consent.

[*Translation*]

Order. It being 6.05 p.m., it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 82(9), to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the supply proceedings now before the House. Accordingly, the question is as follows:

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma) moved:

That this House, recognizing the serious plight of Canadian farmers due to record low world prices for grain and other commodities, calls on the government to make a commitment now to farmers:

(a) to ensure that their returns on grain in the new crop year will at least equal the levels of the 1986-87 crop year;

(b) to maintain the current freeze on grain freight rates charged to farmers;