

I was somewhat pleased—and I notice that my colleague was somewhat surprised—at the comment made by the past president of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association following this announcement. Concerning the \$12 million for drought relief in the way of water supply, he said:

This is one of the areas where we need some help.

That is, in water levels. He went on to say:

... dugouts and wells are very low, so whenever help is available, we accept it gratefully.

This is one of the times in this country that you notice that when something is done for western Canadians they express their gratitude. But he went on to say—and this was rather unusual:

... the Prairie region's livestock sector is already adjusting to this year's harsh conditions. They're not really dependent on government programs.

I do not know whether I can credit or qualify that statement, but I know this: The agriculture ministers of Alberta and Saskatchewan feel somewhat more strongly than that. They feel that this is timely help, but that it will not suffice. I am sure that, even with rains coming in the next few days, which we pray and hope for, this may not be sufficient. I look forward, as has said the premier of my province, to weekly and even daily announcements of further programs to assist in alleviating this condition. I look forward to hearing of more programs that could save the basic herds and the brood cows before they are sent to market, before they are slaughtered and before they cause a rapid drop in the price of beef on the Canadian market, which could be devastating. In the meantime, we realize, and others will document, that the cost of forage and feed is rising as farmers and ranchers scramble to get this feed.

Realizing that these things happen; that the mechanics and the bureaucracy of government move slowly; that something done today is unlikely to be seen in its realization at the end point for some time; that the machinery is slow and must be slow to ensure that everything is done properly and within the proper administration; and given the tardiness of instituting a program, the members of this committee felt that those recommendations should be given to the Minister of Agriculture now, today. Why? So that he and his officials can be stimulated to have the programs to be instituted—perhaps even the finance, if necessary—right at hand so that, when he says, "Go", they start from the starting blocks, and not as if they were starting into training as to which administrative instruments and ways they should utilize to execute these necessary measures.

It is in the hope of putting a program in place expeditiously and quickly, if it is necessary in the next few days and weeks—and I believe in my heart that it will be necessary to do something more in the future—that we have associated ourselves together, not as partisan, political people but as friends of agriculture and the agricultural industry in this country.

Hon. H.A. Olson: Honourable senators, I want to participate in this debate briefly today. In a few minutes I will

[Senator Barootes.]

adjourn the debate until tomorrow so I can have an opportunity to check with certain people in western Canada who I think are knowledgeable about this situation.

I am disappointed that the ministers' meeting in Calgary yesterday could not come up with a more comprehensive program than simply to say that "We will do a little more"—in fact, quite a lot more; I admit that—"for water development." As has been pointed out, the new \$19.2 million budget was originally funded at \$7.2 million. There are thousands of people out there already who are in great difficulty.

While I was listening to Senator Barootes I could not help but agree with the way that he put it. He was not being all that critical of his own party and his own government, although you could read into it that he believed they should have acted before now. If there had been another great Conservative here today, John George Diefenbaker, he would have pointed his finger at the government and said, "Justice delayed is justice denied."

We have been waiting for days, weeks, for this government to act! So they had a great meeting yesterday. After all the fanfare of going through several days of telling us that the Prime Minister had ordered his Minister of Agriculture to call a meeting of all the ministers in western Canada, and so on—after all that is finished, they come along and say, "We will help you develop some water supplies and that sort of thing." He then said something that surprised me. He said, "It has not reached crisis proportions yet."

I heard the Minister of Agriculture in the committee. I believe sincerely, as Senator Hays and Senator Barootes have already pointed out, that he wants to move. He can see that there is already a problem, so I am not too critical of him.

● (1640)

However, in my opinion, and as Senator Barootes pointed out, he is listening to the wrong people out in the west. When the minister says that there is not a crisis now, but that there might be two or three weeks from now, I think that indicates that he is listening to the wrong people. I personally checked with some of the hay dealers out west and they are not taking any more orders. They have sold to their regular customers all the hay that they had.

In any event, I do not intend to explore this subject any further today, because I need a little more time to check around. However, I intend to come back tomorrow with some of the facts from the people who are living right in the affected areas. Therefore, I wish to adjourn the debate until tomorrow.

On motion of Senator Olson, debate adjourned.

GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION BILL, ATLANTIC CANADA, 1987

MOTION TO INSTRUCT NATIONAL FINANCE COMMITTEE TO DIVIDE BILL C-103 INTO TWO BILLS—POINT OF ORDER—
SPEAKER'S RULING RESERVED

Hon. B. Alasdair Graham, pursuant to notice of Tuesday, May 31, 1988, moved: