

They expressed a sense of urgency which can be heard across the country. It is a sense of urgency to which the kind of partisan pot shots across the floor of the House this afternoon do not give justice. It is an urgency that cuts across party lines and escapes partisan debate. It is an urgency that looks at the very real statistics and an urgency that sees around us in rural constituencies the human cost and the human loss, not just the kinds of losses involved if people have to accept lower wages or have their pensions decreased, but losses that represent farms slipping out of the hands of families who have held them for generations, farms which represented something very central to the whole life of people. How can one possibly bring that urgency to the House of Commons late on a Friday afternoon? Partly one can talk about the statistics and how gloomy they are.

● (1620)

The Farm Credit Corporation has just produced a paper which indicates that farm asset values have declined in this past year, a single year, by 12 per cent. The same Farm Credit Corporation paper demonstrates that no less than 34 per cent of Canada's farmers are facing financial stress. The analysis, to continue quoting from this paper, suggests that in Canada as well as in the United States the farm finance situation has become worse over the past 18 months. It says that this deterioration will likely continue, given current forecasts of farm prices and high international stocks of grain and livestock.

The Farm Credit Corporation itself says that payments in arrears have climbed by almost 50 per cent in the 1984-85 fiscal year up to \$160 million. Let us take a look at the value of farm land, which has been the one saving grace for most farm families. We have heard farm families say, "We have a tough time making a go of it because of cash flows each year, but, my goodness, we are accumulating an asset that is growing in value." This past year farm land right across Canada has dropped in value. In Alberta, the province about which the last speaker spoke with tremendous praise for Government policy, farm prices are down by 5 per cent to 10 per cent. In southern Saskatchewan, prices have fallen 30 per cent to 35 per cent in drought-stricken areas. British Columbia has a 5 per cent to 10 per cent decrease. Even in parts of Ontario which started to see a small increase in farm prices in the early part of the year, the situation has reversed and the price of farm land is once again well below what it was at the start of the year. These decreases have taken place at a time when the general economic circumstances of the country have been getting better. The Conservatives have brought this fact before us this afternoon suggesting that it does them credit. However, it is just the reverse in the farm community, Mr. Speaker. The economy has been getting better. Interest rates in general have gone down by three percentage points. Yet, despite the fact that things in general are getting better, the situation in the farm community is getting worse. That demonstrates as clearly as you could possibly want this Government's failure to do what needs to be done in the farm sector.

### Supply

If we were facing a situation of desperation in the rest of the economy and the farm sector was getting its lumps too, the Minister could rise and say "I have a tough situation to face", but things have been getting significantly better regarding outside circumstances which the Minister cannot control while the situation on the farm has gotten worse.

I shall not fall into the trap of saying that this is all the fault of 13 months of Conservative Government because this is a crisis situation which has been building up since 1981-1982. It owes as much to the past failures of the Liberal Government that came before—

**Mr. Della Noce:** Right.

**Mr. Langdon:**—as to the failures of this Government. This Government was elected on promises to change and on promises to improve. It was elected on specific promises to deal directly with the farm credit crisis.

This morning I asked the Minister about the farm credit crisis. I asked him whether he was prepared to do something about other than FCC loans. I asked him whether he would put a moratorium on them. I asked him whether he was prepared to put in place a system of judicial review of the debt situation of farmers. The Minister to his credit replied with some quite positive responses to those suggestions. He told me, and I hope I quote reasonably correctly, that action would be forthcoming of the kind I have been arguing for over the past 13 months since my election, but the Minister has been in office for 13 months. The farm crisis situation existed when he reached his office. It has got worse over the period that he has been in power, and he has no excuse when he gets up today and says action is forthcoming. Action should have taken place already.

We should have in place, at the very least, the kind of thing which the Conservative Government in Saskatchewan has put into effect, a moratorium on farm debt and a system of review of each farm situation where debt looks likely to kick farmers off the land. At the very least, that should have been put into effect.

In May the report came from the Grey Bruce study. It very clearly recommended action at once to set up farm debt review boards. Again, I have talked personally to the Minister about this. He has expressed his sympathy, and he has expressed how favourably inclined he is to do something in this area, but he has not done it. I do not think it is because he does not want to. I think it is because his Government has priorities that are not people priorities. His Government has shown that on a weekend back in March it would move to help the Canadian Commercial Bank. In a week it moved to get \$875 million into the hands of depositors of the Northland Bank and the CCB. Farmers carry the can in this Government as they have in virtually every Government since Confederation.

● (1630)

It was not fair in the last Government. It is not fair in the present Government. I ask back-benchers in this regime to join with us in the kind of push which we are continually making to