

has great feeling for it and they will do as much as they can. Well that is not a lot of information.

It seems to me that if the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of State for Grains and Oilseeds have some very serious problems in cabinet or elsewhere, I think they should be telling us what those problems are. You never know. We might be able to help them a little bit.

• (1520)

There was a mention in the House this morning about playing politics with this issue. Yesterday I said in the House, as part of a question, that there was going to be a rally in Brandon, Manitoba, today. Actually, it is tomorrow. That was an inadvertent statement on my part.

Yet the Minister of Agriculture chose to play politics with that. He chose to score brownie points on me because I inadvertently gave the wrong date. The Minister of Agriculture can go around and abuse me, and that is fine and dandy. However, he should not be playing politics with farmers, and he should not be trivializing the situation faced by the farming community.

**Mr. Duhamel:** It was a cheap shot.

**Mr. Harvard:** I wanted to put those remarks on the record because I think farmers can be somewhat confused by what is coming out of the House. On the one hand we say we are concerned, that we are listening, and we recognize the problems, and want to do a lot. Yet we hear some of these remarks which, if not 180 degrees, are at variance to some of those expressions.

I think we should, as best as we can as politicians, as members of Parliament, be very clear in what we are saying because we are dealing with an extremely serious situation down on the farm. I know that the member for Mackenzie was extremely eloquent this morning when explaining the kinds of problems faced by farmers.

Mr. Speaker, I do not have to tell you that there have been changes in the way we help farmers. We have gone from an old *ad hoc* approach to providing assistance to something that is a little bit more predictable called GRIP and NISA. The old program is gone. That was for the old days. GRIP and NISA are for the future more or less, even if that is the immediate future, a few months

down the road. The problem we have, and this is why the farmers are crying out for emergency assistance, is what do we do in the interim. What do we do to tide the farmers over from the old system to the new system? This is where the so-called third line of defence comes in. This is where transitional assistance comes in, or call it emergency payments. Call it what you will, but the farmers are in desperate need and they need that help now.

There is a shortfall there of \$1 billion, maybe a little less, but it is around \$1 billion. What we have been trying to do is get the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of State for Grains and Oilseeds to address that shortfall of about \$1 billion and let there be no question. There was, there is, there remains on the record a commitment from the government to provide that assistance, to provide that so-called third line of defence payment.

It must happen and it must happen soon because if we wait for GRIP, if we wait for NISA, it is going to be too long. There are going to be some farmers gone, some very good farmers gone, by the end of the year if we wait around. There is no time to fool around.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think I have to go through a litany of figures to tell you just how serious it is. But let me touch on a paragraph in a statement made by prairie pools not too long ago. In fact it was August 29, the very day the Standing Committee on Agriculture met here in Ottawa. Let me read one paragraph: "The five-year-long trade war has taken a significant toll on the grains and oilseeds industry. Net cash income in 1991 will be 5 per cent less than it was last year and 39 per cent lower than the average for the last five years. If the cost of investment and machinery, equipment, and buildings is taken into account there will be only about \$1.1 billion to grains and oilseeds producers to cover living expenses". Put another way, said vice-chairman Leroy Larsen, and I quote: "Unless they have some other source of income, the average farm family will have to live on between \$5,000 and \$6,000 in 1991"—\$5,000 and \$6,000 in 1991. That is less than one third of the low income cut-off or poverty line for a family of four, which has been set at just over \$19,000.