

S. O. 31

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 31

[English]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence): Mr. Speaker, can this government do anything right? In its announcement to provide an \$800 million pay-out to farmers last Thursday, the government was stealing from Peter to pay Paul just a little.

First, the amount translates into only about 25 per cent of what Saskatchewan farmers actually need.

Second, the revenues will be raised by forcing corporations appealing tax impositions to pay 50 per cent of the appeal amount before the appeals are completed. This will not only increase the cash flow problems, but it will also contravene some basic principles proposed by a Tory task force on Revenue Canada chaired by the hon. Minister of Communications in 1984.

That task force stated, and I quote: "Taxpayers must be considered innocent until proven guilty" and "it is objectionable in principle that taxpayers should be penalized before they receive a fair hearing".

We agree. Let the Minister of Finance solve the problems of our agricultural community. Let him do it expeditiously, but let him do it also without compromising fundamental legal principles and without further weakening an already beleaguered sector of the economy.

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[Translation]

SENATOR CLAUDE CASTONGUAY

Mr. Garth Turner (Halton—Peel): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say a few words about Claude Castonguay. Yesterday, we heard that Mr. Castonguay, on the advice of his doctor, had withdrawn from the joint committee on the federal government's constitutional proposals.

That is too bad because this gentleman is greatly respected in Quebec and in the rest of Canada. He has shared his experience with Parliament and given his support to our country. At a time when we need reason, patience and patriotism, we also need people like Claude Castonguay.

I hope he will continue to assist us in the constitutional debate, as an adviser to the government, in the months to come.

Mr. Castonguay, thank you for the work you have done for Canada. You have given us even more reason to fight for this great country of ours.

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[English]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina—Lumsden): Mr. Speaker, some farmers thought they would get a better deal when the Conservatives formed the government in 1984. Boy, did they get a wrong number. Instead of a better deal they got the free trade deal, sky high interest rates, attacks on orderly marketing systems for grain and dirty thirties grain prices.

By the end of last year the total prairie farm debt was \$13.6 billion, \$5.3 billion in Saskatchewan.

In my province two farm families a day are forced off the farm. This year another 253 farm families have gone bankrupt. By the fall of 1990, over 90,000 people were forced to rely on food banks in the prairies, and we have eight of them in rural Saskatchewan.

Just before the recent election they found \$800 million for prairie farmers but it is too little and, by the time they get it, it will be too late.

In Saskatchewan, farmers' net income will decline 53 per cent this year. Farmers need \$1.3 billion immediately. The government must act now to assure the very survival of thousands of farmers and of the prairie farm economy itself.

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YUGOSLAVIA

Mr. Stan Wilbee (Delta): Mr. Speaker, the tragic state of civil violence in Yugoslavia is of grave concern to us all.

The people of Croatia have been devastated. The mass destruction of invaluable historic landmarks and of whole cities such as Dubrovnik is deplorable. However, the real tragedy is the day-to-day loss of human life. The people of Croatia live every moment in fear of another attack from the Yugoslav army. This is unacceptable.