

Government Orders

What I am getting at is that farmers do not do it just for fun or for just making a living. It is a lifestyle. They believe in it. They enjoy it. They want it to continue. It is this lifestyle that they are trying to continue to hold on to.

When they go out during the harvest period or during the spring planting, they work perhaps 16, 18 or 20 hours a day some days. They do not ask for over time. They do not ask for an extra stipend. They do it because they love to work on the land.

I have a question for the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre. It has to do with eliminating the interest free portion of the advance cash payments system. It seems to me that the government is throwing away an advantage or throwing away something in the forthcoming subsidy negotiations. To me, this is a subsidy.

What the government seems to be doing is saying: "We will take off all the subsidies, all the assistance that we give to farmers, and then we will go to the bargaining table". To me, that is putting the cart before the horse. I would like the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre to comment on that.

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I suppose if you have watched this government negotiate in the last five years you would not be surprised. Everything is done backward. Somehow there seems to be a negotiating style which is that if I surrender right from the start everything I possibly have, maybe you will think me a nice person and therefore not tromp on me. It is a reverse style. It is not standing up, using the integrity of your own existing programs or defending them. It is simply looking at the agenda.

I would just like to provide members of the House with this advice. If they want to know what is next on the agenda, I refer them to the executive order that was passed by the U.S. President as part of the free trade deal. All the programs that the Americans identified as being unfair trade practices committed by Canada, left over from the free trade agreement, are the very things that this government is now eliminating: regional payments on unemployment insurance, grain stabilization

and advance payments. It is all in the American document.

I simply say to you, Mr. Speaker, if we want to know what the negotiating style and agenda and blueprint for the Mulroney government is, we have to read what the U.S. President wrote a year ago.

Mr. Bellemare: Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my question to the previous speaker. I chanced to sit on a municipal council for a short while. The mayor of the council was a dairy farmer. He used to take a great amount of time to explain to me about the farm since I was from the city and I knew very little about it. I paid great interest to what he was saying.

He suggested that, the way things are going, perhaps in 20 years from now the dairy farmers like other farmers will most likely lose their farms because of the policies that we see. We could become a country where the farms would be owned by huge international companies like Shell Oil, for example, and the Canadian farmers of today would be the workers on those farms and no longer the owners. More and more we would see the farms become extremely huge and, as I said, owned by these international companies. I wonder if the member would make a comment on that suggestion.

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, the prognosis is correct. Unfortunately the time frame is much shorter. I wish that we had 20 years because it would mean that we could get rid of this government, bring in a proper government, and try to repair the damage they have done.

Mr. Cardiff: You had your chance.

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): We did a good job for the dairy farmers in this country. What has happened is that because of the decision on ice cream and yogurt that was precipitated by signing the free trade deal, we are now faced with an immediate threat to the entire supply and market system of the dairy industry in Canada. That is not 20 years down the track; that is a month or two down the track. If that decision happens, then the structure of the dairy system that we have built up in this country will go into shambles. That is why time is of the essence.