

Supply

I do not know how the justice minister is going to deal with his portfolio in justice which is a very demanding portfolio and still have time to deal with agriculture. He will be an agriculture minister in name only. In fact we have one agriculture minister left in this country and a Prime Minister who is out of touch and has no idea what is going on in the agricultural sector.

What we have been saying is that we have to have a new approach to agriculture. We have been talking about alternatives. The member for Mackenzie was keen in designing an agricultural program back before the 1988 election. We now have a rural policy to deal with other aspects of rural Canada. In fact we are the only party that has been putting forth real alternatives.

The Liberal Party, although some of its members are very concerned about agriculture and are working hard in that area, has no real policy on agriculture. In fact those members obviously do not have the power in the Liberal Party to invoke some changes and direction in Liberal agricultural policy.

As far as the Reform Party is concerned it thinks it should get rid of every single agricultural program that exists and go to a completely free enterprise system. That is ludicrous. That would simply destroy agriculture in Saskatchewan and across the rest of the country.

It has been the New Democratic Party that has put forth some real alternatives in agriculture. We have said that we cannot continue to have a program in which some farmers receive a cheque big enough to buy a half section of land while other farmers are receiving a cheque that will not even pay their fuel bill. In fact some people are actually receiving bills. There is a fellow in Moose Jaw who works in my office, Ron Bishoff, who actually received a bill from the GRIP program.

What we have been saying is that we have to target the money in areas that are going to do the most good. It has become a joke in this country today, the amount of money we have spent on agriculture and the amount of farmers who are still leaving the land. Taxpayers are upset, farmers are upset, rural communities are upset, urban communities are upset. They should be upset because we are not getting the benefits we should be from \$15 billion, \$16 billion or \$18 billion in direct payments going to farm families.

The reason of course is that a lot of times these payments have come out at election time. There is a joke going around, certainly in my riding. The farmers are saying that as there is a federal election coming they are expecting a cheque any day now. Or when the government makes an announcement of some agricultural funds they will know there is an election coming. That is what it has come to.

I know back in 1988, 10 days before the federal election on November 21, on about November 11 the federal government announced it was going to spend \$880 million on agriculture. It did not know how it was going to be spent, it did not know where it was going to be spent, except it told everybody they were going to get \$45 or \$55 an acre, which was not true. That is the mockery that has been made of agriculture.

We have to bring some sense to the agricultural area. The first thing which should be done is this government has to take some leadership. We have a new Minister of Agriculture. He has a golden opportunity to make his mark in the agricultural area and he should be consulting with the provinces.

The minister should be calling a conference with agricultural ministers of the other prairie provinces with a view to providing a framework for future agricultural programs. That is what should be done. They should not be getting together and developing an actual program, but setting some framework and providing the objectives. There should be an objective to maintain a viable rural infrastructure and viable farm families. That is not the direction in which this government has been heading.

A good example is back during the days when we were debating the GRIP legislation before the House. In fact the New Democrats voted against that legislation, I remember during the legislative committee meetings. By the way, it was not a detailed bill. It was enabling legislation. It simply said that the minister shall have the right to enter into something called GRIP. We did not know what GRIP was at that time. There were some principles that were to be set out.

There were four principles in section 2 of that particular act that the minister should take into consideration. He did not have to follow them; he just had to consider them. The program should do a number of things. I pointed out these four principles to both ministers at that time and that they had missed a principle. That principle was that we should take into account the