

Government Orders

Mr. Mills: The hon. member says that we do not know what is going on here. If the hon. member watched *W-5* last night, he would know that 50 per cent of that show was dedicated to the farmers of Canada, who are crying out desperately for government, at all levels, to give them some time and attention. Even though I am an urban member, many of my constituents are phoning my office and telling me that we are not giving enough time to the agricultural community of this country.

I admit readily that many constituents do not understand what crop insurance is. I understand that the government is trying to redefine and reshape its priorities and put more responsibility in the provincial hands. At the same time I do not think the government is realizing that agriculture is not a business. It is like a vocation. I suggest, in my humble opinion, that the government does not realize completely the sacrifices of farmers and the desperate financial shape the farmers of this country are in. If it did I think that we would be spending a lot more time on this issue.

Very few people in this House realize that I have been in agriculture for over 22 years. I do not grow crops but I have been involved and have had an operational farm for over 22 years. Even though I am not involved in it day to day I hear the stories from my own farm manager and our neighbours about how desperate the situation is.

The desperation seems to stem from two or three areas. First, many of our farmers are of an age where they would like to take life a little easier. They see that everyone else in the country has a certain quality of life and that as they get a little older they seem to be able to take things a little easier.

However, in the agriculture community this is not the case. Many of the farmers who are most active in this country today are in their early sixties and some are in their late sixties. This is a tremendous strain for them.

We see that their sons and daughters not wanting to stay on the farms. They are tempted because of the quality of life not to stay in rural Canada but to go to the urban centres. Who is going to carry on these family farms? From coast to coast we are seeing a complete deterioration of the family farm.

I know that members opposite are not designing this kind of a situation. I cannot imagine any man or woman who would want to see that kind of thing happen. The problem is that there does not seem to be an aggressive approach to promoting and enhancing the family farm. There does not seem to be enough awareness in the urban communities of the importance of the family farm and the health of the family farm. There does not seem to be enough communication to the people at large.

Mr. Lewis: He has a hobby farm.

Mr. Mills: There does not seem to be enough communication that family farms are vital to our economy. It is vital in terms of our experts. The hon. member for Simcoe North talks about me trying to give a lecture about family farms—

Mr. Lewis: From Broadview-Greenwood.

Mr. Mills: He knows about many farms in his own community where they are having a very difficult time now, where sons and daughters of those farmers in his own riding are leaving those farms. They are so close to the metropolitan areas that there is a disincentive factor.

An Hon. Member: Welcome to the 20th century.

Mr. Mills: Welcome to the 20th century he says. That is the attitude we get when we are trying to talk constructively about the family farm in this House. That is precisely the problem. This government is so pre-occupied with the retreat from national governments, so pre-occupied with cutting things like—

Mr. Blais: Where?

Mr. Mills: Where? VIA Rail, unemployment insurance, farm programs coast to coast. Cutting back on crop insurance responsibility and adding it on to the provinces. Right now you have disadvantaged provinces—

Mr. Blais: They all agree. The farmers agree. You don't know what you are talking about.

Mr. Mills: There is the smugness and the arrogance of the members opposite when we are trying to make people aware of a group in our society right now which is crying out.