

of Canada. They have failed to realize that a solution to these problems requires an effective and imaginative response.

We hear the same refrain, that the NEP is at fault, each time there is a downturn in the oil industry. Those Conservative Members express the school yard, juvenile addled pratter, "The devil made me do it". They are not prepared to accept their responsibility as a Government and come to grips with the real problem. They are trailing in the polls in western Canada because western Canadians are discerning and know when they are being given a con job. They know when the Government is not prepared to fulfil all those promises it had made.

Let us consider agriculture for a moment. There was an interesting article in *The Western Producer*, written by a very distinguished journalist whom I believe all Members would admit is someone with much integrity. Mr. Barry Wilson pointed out that when the Conservatives were trying to gain power in 1983-84 they said they would far surpass the record of the Liberals in developing the agriculture export field. They cancelled Canagrex because they said they had a better way to proceed.

As Mr. Wilson pointed out in his article in *The Western Producer* on May 7, agriculture exports are way down. He said:

—instead of an \$11 billion increase in farm export values, government officials now predict the value of exports in 1987 will be almost \$1 billion below 1984 exports of close to \$10 billion.

An Hon. Member: It is the price of grain.

Mr. Axworthy: Of course there is a problem in the international export market. Of course prices are down. However, what is the Government doing about it? The farm groups have been saying for months that they need a substantial cash flow in order to make up the difference and enable them to stay on the farm. Mr. Mulroney goes out and says—

Mr. Malone: Order.

Mr. Axworthy: I am sorry, the Prime Minister. I think I can be excused if at times the gentleman who occupies the post of Prime Minister is not seen that way in my eyes or in the eyes of most Canadians, because he does not adequately fulfil that responsibility.

As an example of the pleas coming from people in Alberta, let me refer to a group from the Lethbridge area, comprised of municipal councillors, reeves, members of the farm review boards and members of agricultural organizations. They came to Ottawa to try to persuade the Government to respond. They received a five-minute meeting with the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise), and that was the extent of his commitment to those farmers representing 20,000 farmers in that area. They said they needed a clear commitment of a deficiency payment so that they could tell their bankers they were able to stay on the land. They said they needed some restructuring of the farm debt credit problem. What did they receive? They received a visit from the Prime Minister. One of those people gave me a

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message to bring back to the House of Commons. Don't send the Prime Minister, send cash instead.

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It is not a matter of deciding who is to blame. We know that the commodity industry, the backbone of the western Canadian way of life, is bleeding heavily. If that is allowed to continue, if the economic base of western Canada shrinks further, then it will never recover. The Government has the responsibility of responding to that problem. It is not someone else's responsibility. There is not another Government around. There will be in about two years but right now the problem is—

Mr. Scowen: Dream away.

Mr. Axworthy: Anyone who is standing at 23 per cent in the polls has nightmares, not dreams. I am sorry, the governing Party of Canada is now at 26 per cent and running third in western Canada. That is a great accomplishment.

I again plead with the Government to look at the facts and the consequences. It is not a matter of statistics or just saying the industry is in trouble. Look at what is beginning to happen. We had an announcement this week from the Alberta Minister of Health that as a result of the downturn the province is going to cut back on medicare payments. What is it that the province will not pay for anymore? It is podiatry treatment. Who uses podiatrists? Old people. That enlightened Conservative Government of Alberta says it is no longer going to provide support for the medical treatment of older people who have problems with their feet. What does the federal Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp) say? He has been given the responsibility for health in this country by legislative mandate. He says that is okay; why not? We have to look at that in human terms. We have older people who no longer feel they have the right to get proper medical treatment. Why? Because of the abdication of responsibility by various levels of Government.

Let us look at another issue which was not included in the Hon. Member's resolution, but which should have been and I understand why it was not. The NDP position is to abolish the Senate. They do not believe in it. The fact is that a majority of westerners, I would say, have come to the conclusion that the only way they will ultimately get the kind of attention they deserve and a fair deal in Confederation is through Senate reform. Senate reform has been endorsed by the Conservative Government of Alberta, by my Party, and a wide variety of groups. The federal Conservatives are conspicuous by their absence from that coalition but, nevertheless, it is now clear that the thrust towards Senate reform may be in jeopardy.

The ability to bring about the kind of constitutional amendment necessary may have been put in peril. The fact is that the Government has decided to pass control of a federal institution to the provincial Premiers. That will substantially alter the nature of this federation. It means that a federal