

Farmers are facing debts which threaten their existence. The number of bankruptcies is rising. Those farmers who can continue to farm have no disposable income. They are living in poverty. The prices for their products are falling while the costs of production continue to rise. From the point of view of farmers, they are in a critical situation. Critical situations demand fundamental and radical solutions.

What is the Government doing? Today it is moving and today it deserves credit. It is making available an additional \$800 million that will be going to farm producers. This will provide some \$5,000 or \$6,000 to each producer. Thus it is helpful and the Government deserves some credit for taking some positive action.

Is it enough? Will it resolve the fundamental problems that have put the farmer in the crisis situations that they are facing today? Will it ease the poverty of farmers? The answer to those questions is a resounding no.

I wish to mention a couple of other areas in which the Government has tackled the agricultural question and failed in the test of leadership when it comes to resolving these problems. One such area has to do with the international negotiations in which the Government is involved. In this respect it is approaching the problem with band-aid solutions when what is required is radical surgery.

The Government takes credit for the fact that agriculture is on the agenda of GATT. Just because it is on the agenda does not mean that it will be resolved adequately. It does not mean that the agricultural war in subsidies between the European Common Market and the United States, which is hurting our producers, will be resolved. We have all gone to meetings at which items of vital concern to us are on the agenda and we have all walked away from such meetings disappointed because our problems were not resolved. Simply to have the item on the agenda is not enough.

The trade deal of the Prime Minister has a section which deals with trade subsidies. I opened the trade deal up to read those words carefully, because when we were holding hearings with regard to the trade deal an agricultural group came before us in support of it. I thought then that there must be a resolution to the problems of farmers in this trade deal. When I read the words of the deal I saw that it was a promise to deal with agricultural subsidies, a promise and nothing more. We have had promises before. We have had inflated promises before from the Prime Minister. If there is one thing that our Prime Minister is famous for it is his inflated promises.

To deal specifically with the American-Canadian relationship, we have had promises with regard to acid rain. Those have created no concrete results. Here again we have promises that the Government will deal with the problems facing agriculture, but they are nothing more than promises.

To sum up what the Government is doing with regard to agriculture, it is taking a band-aid approach to a festering sore. It makes available some short term payments which are

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welcome and which are necessary but, then, a starving man will always accept a slice of bread. The Government has said that the problem of the grain subsidy war is on the agenda at GATT. Yet it has not enunciated any convincing strategy for resolving the problem at that level. The Prime Minister's trade deal has a promise for some time in the future to deal with subsidies, but there have been no results.

● (1230)

I want to deal with a final aspect of the crisis in agriculture and the failure of the Government to meet the test of leadership in resolving the problems of farmers by looking at them from the point of view of what is required. As I said at the beginning of my remarks, the farming community is in critical condition because of the subsidy war between the United States and the European Economic Community in agricultural matters. We need peace in the agricultural subsidy war, and we need this country to live up to its potential in international negotiations.

Former Prime Minister Pearson won the Nobel Peace Prize for his international negotiations, for having brought peace to a conflict in the Middle East. Let us reach for that potential once again and apply it to international trading relationships as they affect agriculture.

Primarily the Prime Minister is running for public support on the basis of a free trade agreement which he negotiated on the international scene. He is claiming to be a great negotiator and a great conciliator. Let him apply those skills to agriculture. Let him bring peace to the agricultural war on subsidies which is critically hurting our farmers.

I want to sum up by simply saying that in my view—and I am sure it is the view of most farmers—the Government has failed the leadership test when it comes to resolving the problems in agriculture. I say “leadership test” because leadership would find solutions to problems to resolve the situation so that we do not have to live with them every day.

The Government has found band-aid solutions, which means that the sore continues to fester. It has yet to demonstrate in its actions an awareness that farmers are faced with a crisis today or that the farming community is in critical condition. What the Government has done so far is palliative, and what is needed is fundamental, radical surgery. We want a solution to the problems facing agriculture. We want the Government to show strong leadership and to take initiatives which will resolve the trading war that is hurting our farmers, rather than having the Prime Minister cosy up to the American President and singing “When Irish Eyes are Smiling”, while they are selling out Canadian agriculture.

Mr. Mayer: What would you do? Tell us your policy. What would you do?

Mr. Keeper: Mr. Chairman, I hear a voice over there. I would welcome the Minister standing in the House and explaining why he is supporting a trade deal with the United