

Government Orders

Canadian producers need that legislation now, and they need the financial assistance to go along with it. Farm incomes are forecast to drop dramatically this year as Canadian farmers are victims in an international trade war in which their government refuses to fire a shot. I call on the government to show some compassion in view of the fact that farmers are not getting their operating loans this year. Again, one cannot cash flow one's input costs against expected returns.

I call on the government to provide an insurance coverage program by delaying the payments on the premiums until the harvest and sale of this crop takes place. Surely, in these economically tough times, the government could take a look at this. We are only asking the government to share some of the risk rather than have these people not being able to plant their crops because they cannot afford crop insurance.

I have a petition here that the Ontario Wheat Producers Marketing Board committeemen presented the week before last, on March 6, to the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of State for Grains and Oilseeds, asking for help. It states:

The undersigned Ontario wheat producers, duly elected county committeemen, implore the federal government to immediately establish price support to equalize the damage caused to Ontario wheat prices by the United States export enhancement program. Such support can be accomplished by approval of the Ontario Wheat Board's request for the 1990 initial payment guarantee of \$130 per tonne.

These committeemen, and there are three pages of names here, represent 25,000 wheat producers across the province of Ontario.

We have letters of request from the Ontario Corn Growers Association. Again, it asks the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister to realize the severity of the drought experienced in several parts of southwestern Ontario and central Ontario last year and to come across with some assistance this year to help in planting the crops.

It goes on and on. The soybean producers are equally hard hit. It is the same for the wheat producers in Saskatchewan.

On March 12 the corn producers announced that their members' incomes have declined substantially and are

now only 28 per cent of pre-1985 levels. This shows that incomes have dropped dramatically since this government took power in 1984. The sums the government is currently offering barely meet one-tenth of the United States Export Enhancement Program's current allocation of \$570 million. That is a program which is to be increased to \$900 million for next year.

We should not fail to consider the European Economic Community's subsidies which the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture on March 5 estimated to be close to \$80 a tonne for grains.

In view of this situation, I call on the minister and the government to listen to all these requests for assistance and to act now before it is too late so that our producers can plant their crops this year.

We have the most efficient producers in the world who grow the highest quality produce. The government should not be abandoning its responsibility to provide equitable crop insurance as this bill clearly does. I cannot support this bill in its current form.

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the remarks of the hon. member. I noticed that he mentioned some of the wheat producers and corn producers with whom he met recently are pointing out the great need for a price support program of some sort to offset the effects of the grain wars going on between the United States and the European Economic Community. Would he care to comment on that just a little bit more? Would he place particular emphasis on the initiative that the U.S. embarked upon some years ago to try to get all countries off a subsidy program, which is interesting coming from that country which is one of the highest users of taxpayers' money to produce raw grain and food products of any country in the world?

A lot of the other countries have programs that force their consumers to pay more for food products, countries such as Japan and countries in Europe. The U.S. is the most fervent user of taxpayers' money to produce food to try to get the price down. The result has been a very low amount of money that the consumer pays for the grocery bill. It is something like 11 per cent of income. That is masked because that same consumer's tax pocket is being used all the time to keep the price of food low.