

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Mayer:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is a well educated gentleman. He is a doctor of veterinary medicine and he knows very well that the way he uses figures is about as creative and as imaginative as can get. Euclid would be absolutely astounded to see the way he uses figures. He gives the impression that once the money is lent to farmers they never have to pay it back. This is silly. Surely he can come up with a better statement in the House of Commons than that.

The point is that sure the fact that a farmer can obtain a cash advance means that that money goes out sooner than it otherwise would. That is, by definition, what a cash advance is. A cash advance is an advance against the sale of a crop harvested but not yet sold. When the farmer sells his crop he has to repay the cash advance. The benefit to the farmer is in the form of interest forgone. That is what we are talking about. It is approximately \$25 million and it varies from year to year. The figure used is \$27 million; about two-thirds in western Canada and the remaining in the other parts of the country for other crops.

To suggest that there is that kind of a cost benefit ratio is absolute nonsense. If they are so concerned about not having cash advances available and not having that kind of money injected into the economy, surely the way to do it is to pass this bill. There may be even more money injected into the economy because you have raised the limits.

We have said right off the bat—and I said it today and yesterday—that farmers are going to have to pay interest. I am not disagreeing with any of the farm organizations. People want as much as they can get, especially from government, but there comes a time when you have to say there is a limit and we are saying that this is one of them.

When the hon. member uses those kinds of numbers and suggests that they mean anything, I suspect that he does not even believe his own figures. He is simply trying to use some numbers to dramatize a point that he really does not have. Again, if the opposition is so concerned about cash advances, let it pass the bill; we will have cash advances and farmers will then pay interest.

**Mr. Ferguson:** Mr. Speaker, I have to reject completely what the minister has tried to put across here in the House, that we are delaying the passage of this bill.

This bill was tabled on June 26 in this House. On the second day after Parliament was recalled, on September 26, the bill was discussed. The government asked permission to withdraw it from this House because it was totally flawed. That reflects the incompetence on the other side of the House and that was part of the delay.

We did not get to the debate until this week and I think the government is suggesting now that Parliament should give up its right to debate in order to cover up the incompetence of the government for its having to withdraw the bill and the delay that it caused which is keeping the money from the producers.

However, when he says that it is due to a budgetary cut or trying to save money, I wonder if the minister could comment on the fact that the total tax he will be collecting on tobacco and alcoholic beverages for the coming year will be \$3.5 billion. Some \$27 million is small potatoes compared to that. When we considered what is coming out as a result of primary production in terms of the tobacco tax and the grains that go into the manufacture of alcoholic beverages, I think that is a small return the government should be obligated to maintain to help the producers produce the products that result in such a windfall for this government.

I want to ask the minister once more: if you are concerned about getting the money into the hands of the producers, will you withdraw this legislation, revert to the former legislation, sign your agreements with the producers and get money in their hands if this is your wish?

**Mr. Mayer:** Mr. Speaker, I guess it is easy to get up and make statements in isolation. The hon. member makes the point that we collect all this money in taxes and I think wants to leave the impression that the only money we spend as a government in support of farmers is money in the previous legislation, the interest forgone. That is not the case at all. He knows that.

The record of this government in supporting farmers is a very good one. I do not know if I can give figures off the top of my head, but I think in the last calendar year in direct and indirect payments we have probably spent over \$3 billion in support of farmers. We are spending a considerable amount of money, aside from the interest that the government pays on behalf of farmers in these