

Government Orders

Another blow to rural Canada is the reduction in regional development programs. There have been a number of cuts in regional development programs and that has been a blow to rural Canada. There have been cut-backs in the crop insurance program. That was alluded to in one of my colleagues' statements in the House yesterday. This is another blow that has to be sustained by the farmers of Canada.

When you come right down to it, the government is just killing rural Canada. If we have to live with this government much longer, there will be nothing left of rural Canada. These kinds of vicious attacks on rural Canada have to come to a stop, and the sooner the better.

The Deputy Prime Minister yesterday indicated that there is some kind of emergency with respect to this bill. He wants us to ram it through as quickly as possible because he wants to reinstitute the program so that farmers can have cash advances. They will get the cash advances if this bill goes through but not interest free. They will have to pay interest.

Who brought on the emergency? First of all, the farmers did not ask for a suspension of this program precipitously and without any kind of notice. The program was suspended. It was put into limbo by provisions of the budget last spring. The farmers have been left with this hanging over their heads all through the latter part of the spring, right through the summer and now it is fall. Winter is coming. The grain is in the bin. Farmers have to pay bills and still this government dithers.

The government complains about getting this done. It has to get this bill through as though there were an emergency. Who caused it? It certainly was not the farmers of Canada. It certainly was not the members on this side of the House. It was those people over there. They have to take the blame for this. They have to take the responsibility.

I would say in my few closing moments that this program has to be rethought. It has to be reviewed. It is quite apparent that the government did this without consultation and without sitting down with the farm organizations and asking them what is best for farmers. If they had done that, the farmers of Canada would have

told them to leave it alone, that it is a good program. It has been in place for 30 years, don't touch it. If you want to save money and fight the deficit, you have all kinds of areas where you can go. You do not have to kill a program that has been serving the farm community well and serving the entire country.

My plea is to have this bill withdrawn and redrafted. Go back to the drafting boards and come back with something that makes sense, something that is going to help farmers and the agricultural community and ultimately all Canadians and the country.

Mrs. Finestone: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for the very interesting speech which I listened to the other day. I continue to hear today that farmers are subject once again to the government's short-sighted view.

I would ask my hon. colleague if he feels that this government has said that basically there are no sacred cows in our society, everything is subject to meeting the yardstick of profit. Bottom line budgeting is the important goal. The links that bind us in such a unique way in this country that has a physical geography that is different than any other place in the world is not taken into consideration. Now out goes the infrastructure of a good VIA Rail transportation system. Out went Air Canada and Teleglobe to the private sector. Now you are talking about this new move with respect to the farmers. In my colleague's view, is this Tory view that the only sacred trust left is bottom line profit one that is shared by the farmers that he spoke to.

Mr. Harvard: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. friend because I think her questions reflect that she knows exactly what this government is doing. The fact is that there is nothing sacred in this country. There is nothing sacred about Canada in so far as this government is concerned. It wants to carry out a kind of revolution without consulting Canadians. Conservatives did not say in the election campaign that they were going to shut down half of VIA Rail, and we all know that if we shut half of it down the rest of it will wither away very quickly. Not only are they interested in only the so-called bottom line but they seem to be hell-bent on developing the great American model for this country.