

Supply

• (1550)

It is not always simply a matter of giving money but also of protecting farming on a long-term basis.

The motion before us today, Mr. Speaker, suggests that we have not provided any third-line assistance under our general income security plan for farmers. This overlooks the farm support and adjustment program. Like a third line of defence, it adds \$600 million to the total aid given under our two basic programs, more than \$400 million of which will be spent in 1991. It also overlooks all the adjustments already proposed by the national horticulture income security committee for 1990 and 1991.

It is true that we use regular programs including NISA as a vehicle for several of these support measures. It is also true, Mr. Speaker, that discussion with the provinces on their participation in the NISA program is dragging on and has not yet given all the results expected of it. Nevertheless, it is estimated that it will provide \$356 million in aid to farming in 1991. I am not unduly surprised that it takes some time to implement these programs. They were developed and prepared by the farmers themselves, who worked with us, the provincial and federal governments, in preparing long-term defence programs for farmers. They made these programs; the government did not impose them on farmers. The government did not. Farmers themselves prepared them with us.

Of course there is an adjustment period. It is natural, I believe, for a government that listens to the provinces and the farmers' associations to hold effective discussions with the provinces and have adjustment measures that give it and the provinces some flexibility.

La Presse agricole de l'Ontario said that grain growers in that province hoped that an agreement on the Net Income Stabilization Account would be reached as soon as possible. Ontario has already announced that it would make interim payments to its farmers under GRIP. Mr. Speaker, under this program, grain growers in Canada may have earned as much as \$6.5 billion for the last crop year. We may regret the long and demanding process involved. We can't afford to short-circuit the process or get rid of it altogether or jeopardize its effectiveness by making decisions on the spur of the moment which, I admit, is sometimes tempting in the circumstances.

What the government is trying to achieve in the agricultural sector is the kind of stability that is economi-

cally sustainable and does not have to be constantly challenged and rebuilt. The whole point of linking third-line-of-defence assistance programs to existing, longer term programs is to help producers in all regions, in Quebec, Ontario, Western Canada and the Maritimes, opt into long-term protection programs, so that in the middle or at the end of the crop season, the government does not have to intervene with ad hoc programs, something everybody in this country deplores. That is exactly why we set up long-term programs, and now we are being criticized for using those programs as a vehicle for providing assistance to farm producers.

The process is a lengthy one. We must be patient and prudent, at a time when the finances of both provincial and federal governments are under severe constraints. The multifaceted measures we are trying to introduce are intended as a response to an extremely complex situation. Their efficiency and effectiveness can easily be compromised if we fail to act cautiously. If all the gears are not carefully adjusted, we may end up with a machine that won't run. The intricacies of this process were explained by Mr. Mazankowski, Minister of Agriculture at the time, at the federal-provincial meeting of Agriculture ministers in Regina last March. On that occasion he reminded his audience that it would be simplistic to calculate farm assistance on the basis of a comparison between 1990 and 1991 incomes. He said that this approach had been tried for the past five years and had always left us with a problem. We could no longer afford a stop-gap solution that would only be effective for another year.

The 12-point program he proposed at the time was built around the two new programs we are trying to implement systematically today. There would also be a third line of defence which for 1991 would have a component that would apply to the grain and horticultural sectors.

Mr. Speaker, this has been done. In fact, we are ahead of schedule because the program will apply to 1990-91. We cannot do more without jeopardizing the structure of the program, especially if we act without good reason.

Mr. Speaker, hasty actions and generous hand-outs are no way to provide our farmers with a lasting solution to their problems. Many conditions were identified as essential to the success of farming, that we care about, but they are far from being met. A lot needs to be done yet, Mr. Speaker. Take the unfair trade practices which