

The Address—Mr. Neil

was given \$500,000 or half a million dollars to spend on job-creation projects in his or her constituency. I find this absolutely incredible. It is nothing more than an attempt to enhance the image of incumbent Liberal MPs and an attempt to buy votes.

Is this the way our democratic system should work? It is not what I was taught to believe. It was not what I spent almost four years in the armed forces to protect. It is shameful, it is disgusting and at the same time it is sad to see a political Party, which has been in power for many of the past 117 years, prostitute itself and by its actions erode the very system of which we as Canadians are so proud.

We must also make mention of the actions of the Department of National Revenue, the Department which has been under criticism for the past few months. Over the years before coming to Parliament, I did a considerable amount of tax work. It was quite pleasant work because at that point in time there was communication with tax officials. If there was a problem, it was a simple matter to communicate with those officials. We could sit down with them and discuss the problem with them and with our clients. We could reach a solution without too much difficulty. In those days appeals were few and far between. They generally involved the interpretation of a particular section.

Now appeals are commonplace. No longer do we find any personal relationship between the tax Department, its officials and taxpayers. We are dealing with a computer which does not have the power to reason or, if it communicates, it communicates in stilted phrases. In the alternative, we are dealing with assessors whose jobs and/or promotions depend upon a quota set by some senior bureaucrat. Just imagine the position in which an assessor finds himself—he must meet his quota or else! Of course, the Minister has denied that there was any quota. He said that targets were set. I would like to know what is the difference between a target and a quota. I would suggest that in the minds of assessors there is no difference. I would say that always in the minds of assessors is the fact that either they produce, meet their target or quota, or else they will not survive.

In the time remaining I would like to make a few comments in the area of agriculture because my constituency is an agricultural one. The urban areas of the constituency are dependent upon the agricultural economy to survive. I looked forward with anticipation to what might be in the Speech from the Throne in the area of agriculture because in the 12 years I have been in the House of Commons the Minister of Agriculture has done very little to improve the economic viability of farmers.

Mr. Gurbin: You might say nothing.

Mr. Neil: My colleague is close to being right. Over the years the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) has spent a great deal of time on rhetoric and very little time on action. He has no long-term plan. He talks about various aspects of agriculture. He has talked about research and development and how important it is, yet he has been unable to persuade his

Cabinet to increase substantially the amount of money which is being spent on research and development in agriculture. In fact, it took us three years to persuade the Minister of Agriculture to release some \$9 million of producers' money which the Government was holding in a non-interest bearing account for an organization that was interested in research and development. He has talked about red meat stabilization programs, but he has been unable to bring together the provincial Ministers of Agriculture to discuss and agree on developing a plan. He really does not want to talk to the provincial Ministers of Agriculture because he has his own ideas as to what a red meat stabilization plan should be. He stood in the House and spoke in support of the Bill to eliminate the Crow. He voted in favour of that Bill which will have the effect of increasing freight rates to prairie farmers, prairie grain producers, five times by 1990. This is the Minister of Agriculture who says over and over: "I have the interests of the farmers of Canada at heart".

Farmers, particularly those in western Canada, are in a difficult position. In fact they are in serious trouble because the price of many products is low. Interest rates are high, there are high input costs and shrinking incomes. Bankruptcies are increasing. However, these figures are deceiving because in addition to bankruptcies there are voluntary liquidations and quit claim deeds being taken by financial organizations which are not recorded by Statistics Canada. Many family farms are disappearing.

What did the current Speech from the Throne have to say about agriculture? I would like to quote wherein it read:

To help ensure that food production will continue to be one of Canada's long-term strengths, a livestock stabilization program will be established in co-operation with the provinces. Amendments will be proposed to the powers of the National Farm Products Marketing Council. A commission of inquiry will study the problems of potato marketing in Eastern Canada. The maximum for advance payments for grain will be increased. Amendments will be introduced to the Western Grain Stabilization Act to make it more responsive to the needs of producers.

What about increases in advance payments on crops? This has been talked about time and time again over the past five or six years. This Party has said that if the Government will bring in amendments, we will put it through in one day. That is more rhetoric, Mr. Speaker.

• (1210)

What about the western grain stabilization Bill? There is not a farmer in western Canada who is happy with it. Those who are covered by the plan have been in financial difficulties for a number of years, yet the way the plan has been set up, on a five-year average, it will not trigger a payment. There is about \$1 billion in that account and there has been no payout.

The Speech from the Throne says that amendments will be made—and there is no question about that because an election is in the offing—in order that there will be a payout under the plan, to try and buy votes in western Canada. That is what will happen. There has never really been a proper assessment of the plan. There is not a farmer in western Canada who is happy with the plan or, if there is, I have not talked to him.