

Senate, and particularly to the attention of the sponsor of this bill and the Leader of the Government in the Senate, respecting the crisis in agriculture that is, apparently, unknown to honourable senators opposite. If it is unknown to them, I think we have an obligation to draw it to their attention in the most forceful way that we can.

I also wanted to say a few words on this bill because of the introductory remarks of Senator Barootes when he moved second reading. I know Senator Barootes well. I know that he is sincere and does not intend to mislead this house, or to make statements that are in any way deceptive. I am not blaming him for some of the figures that he quoted in his speech, because I have seen them before. As a matter of fact, some of the figures that he used, namely, that this government has passed out \$5.1 billion in the last two years to agriculture all over Canada and that \$3.2 billion of that has been made available to western agriculture, I have seen before, because the Deputy Prime Minister, the Honourable Don Mazankowski, sent a letter to the *Calgary Herald* containing all of those figures, and they devoted a whole page to them. What annoys me more than anything else is that the figures, as they are presented, do not represent the truth. I think that Senator Barootes understands that, and yet it was put forward that these programs were introduced by this Conservative government since they took office.

● (1450)

Senator Barootes: I never said that.

Senator Olson: I will tell the honourable senator what he did say. He can find this at page 589 of *Debates of the Senate*. He said:

This kind of approach characterizes the government's record when it comes to agriculture. This government has made available \$3.2 billion of Canadian revenue in assistance to western grain farmers and \$5.1 billion on agriculture in its first two years in office . . .

What does "Canadian revenue" mean in that context? If it means that that much money was taken out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund and passed out in several programs to western Canadian agriculture, that is simply not true. The government did not take that much money out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund; rather, for example, it took \$1.4 billion that was in reserves in the Western Grain Stabilization Fund.

Yesterday I asked the honourable senator how this was made up and he replied:

Here are the figures based on one year only: Western Grain Stabilization Act, \$859 million; . . .

I agree that that is correct. The \$1.4 billion for the two years is what was in the reserve fund that had been built up by the previous government and by farmers' payments into that fund. He went on to say:

. . . Agricultural Stabilization Act, \$55.8 million; . . .

I agree that that was a transfer out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund for that year. He then went on to say:

. . . Crop Insurance Act, \$320 million; . . .

That is just not true. Farmers pay into that fund.

Senator Barootes: But the figure is correct.

Senator Olson: I do not know whether the figure is correct or not, and neither, apparently, does he. I can tell him that the reason I cannot get the exact figure is because the Crop Insurance Fund is not paid out of the federal treasury at all; it is paid by the provinces' crop insurance administration. The federal government pays 50 per cent of the premium and the farmers pay the other 50 per cent. It is then paid over to the crop insurance administration in each of the provinces and then the claims by the farmers or the producers are made to those administrations. The amount of money that was paid to the farmers may be \$320 million or it may be some other figure, but I also know that there was a very large reserve in the crop insurance funds in many of the provinces, which reserve was contributed to by farmers and by the federal government in previous years.

What we have, honourable senators, is government by deception.

Some Hon. Senators: Oh, oh!

Senator Argue: It is a hoax.

Senator Olson: Senator Argue is right, what you are trying to say to the Canadian people about what you are doing for Canadian agriculture is a hoax. If it were not doing a lot of damage to the agriculture sector, I would probably let it pass, but it is. A few minutes ago Senator Argue mentioned that you can talk urban people and those outside the area of agriculture into believing that you are paying all this money to agriculture out of taxpayers' money or out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund, but you do a terrible disservice to farmers and to agriculture when you make that kind of a pretence.

Agriculture needs and deserves some consideration in terms of the amount of money you claim you have taken out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund, but it is not getting it. As I mentioned a few minutes ago during Question Period, organizations are springing up because the credit crisis of farmers is so serious now that even long-term farmers who had been stable over many years are now being affected by what this government is doing and has done to them. I am referring to what they have done by both commission and omission; and omission is the more serious.

I can tell the Leader of the Government in the Senate that there is nothing new about this. Farmers are starting to realize that every time the Tories are in office for a little while their whole economy collapses. In 1930, when R.B. Bennett was elected, we went into the worst depression. And, of course, it is always somebody else's fault! However, I can tell you that the distress that occurred in Canada was worse in the prairies than in any other part of the country. The next Conservative government that came into office, "Diefenbaker and Company", found exactly the same kind of results two or three years after they had been in office. I remember 1961 and 1962 as being one of the most difficult periods farmers have experienced over the past 30 years.