to be faced with a situation where the Party which supposedly was to give us freedom of information is stonewalling it.

We understand that the Hon. Member for Assiniboia made a number of recommendations in his report which were not listened to. If that is so, it is the kind of information that Canadians should know. If he did not make the report, from where did the recommendations come? Was $150 million recommended? Was the amount paid to the Government of Saskatchewan for drought payments part of the recommendations of the Hon. Member for Assiniboia? I understand the average payment was about $6.88 per acre. Is that the amount that was recommended, and is that what was actually paid? Canadians have the right to know these things.

I do not know why the Hon. Member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell (Mr. Boudria) moved his motion when he did. However, there is something to learn from the entire procedure. Those people involved in agriculture in Canada need a structure which is not quite as *ad hoc* as the present one to deal with drought and other disasters in the agricultural community. Perhaps the information contained in the report of the Hon. Member for Assiniboia, which was presented to Cabinet, would provide insight into the kinds of programs which could be put into place, programs which would not be *ad hoc* or contain disturbing features. I hope there will be some kind of guarantee to Canadian farmers in the future so that they can be assured of obtaining a good price for their produce. In the event of storms, frost, or any other disaster which reduces the crops of farmers, the Government of Canada should guarantee to make available funding so that they can at least survive.

Western Canada has some of the most efficient and most effective producers of agricultural products in the world. Many of them are having trouble surviving and are unlikely to survive a great deal longer, unless there is some kind of guarantee that they will receive a return on their production in the next year. Perhaps we should be travelling around to find out all the information we can. This would provide us with a better understanding of the continued cash flow problems faced by Canadian agricultural commodity producers.

We are really talking about two or three different things when we ask for these papers. First, we believe that the people of Canada have the right to a basic understanding of how great was the problem and how well the Government dealt with it. Second, in that the Government has espoused freedom of information, larger quantities of information should be available to help Canadians understand why the Government makes the decisions it makes. Third, we need to compile information and use it in such a way as to solve the problems caused by disasters so that farmers do not have to repeatedly go to the Government and ask for assistance. They should not have to tell the Government that they have experienced another disaster and do not have funds in their organization and therefore it will have to dip into the revenue fund.

The Government seems willing to pay for banks and trust companies when they get into trouble. However, when it comes to paying for 24,000 or 30,000 farmers who are in trouble year after year, it means that something is wrong with the system. We should take the information available to us and use it to ensure that these things do not happen continuously or do not happen in the future. I hope the Government will provide the report, if it is available, not only to Parliament but to the people of Canada.

Mr. Stan Schellenberger (Wetaskiwin): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to follow the Hon. Member for Prince Albert (Mr. Hovdebo) whose speech improved as he went on. I agree with the last part of his speech. It is important for Parliament to come up with a better and more permanent solution to natural disasters as far as farming is concerned.

If we improved the crop insurance program by including a section which automatically insured farmers for natural disasters, it could be a solution to the problem of dealing with crop disasters and natural disasters each time they happen.

Many Members have visited areas stricken by drought. My constituency suffered as a result of the drought in Alberta. I think they would agree that we must direct our minds to improving the crop insurance plan so that it deals with disasters. We do not need a task force such as the one headed by the Hon. Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Gustafson) each time we are faced with a natural disaster.

I understand that Members of the New Democratic Party and the Liberal Party may be upset that they did not participate in the task force. I think the opportunity was given to them to participate. That is why they would like to see the recommendations that came forward. Of course the Government is going to comply and offer the papers to the Hon. Member and to Hon. Members of this House who have put forward the motion. It is important that we discuss for the future the recommendations and the experience we have had as a result of the serious drought that occurred in many areas of western Canada in the last three to four years.

• (1820)

There is no question that it is difficult today for farmers to work out a plan to survive on their farms if they are hit by a natural disaster. Commodity prices are so low that they are simply not covering the cost of production. No one can put away funds for future difficulties.

I can remember in 1955-56-57 that we were completely hailed out for those three years in a row. The farm, however, was able to survive because in previous years we were able to put away some money in the event of these kinds of disasters. Today in mine and my neighbour's operation that is simply not possible, nor is it possible to put aside any funds to replace machinery. That is how serious the situation is today in agriculture across Canada.

If a farm is faced with a natural disaster, as many prairie farmers have been for a period of one, two, three and in some cases four years, it becomes almost impossible to survive even with government programs. I agree that we have to work out