

*Government Orders*

My hon. friend from Alberta would have to look under a lot of rocks out there to find people who support this goods and services tax. The Conservative back-benchers are all decent individuals, but something happens when they get together in here. They lose any sense, compassion, thoughtfulness and caring. They listen to the Minister of Finance from Bay Street where everybody is doing fine. They have large incomes, the lobbyists have large incomes, and he is surrounded by public servants whose incomes are in excess of \$100,000 a year. They are all comfortable. Everybody is working. Their spouses are all doing well. He never gets out to meet normal people. I do not know if the Minister of Finance knows any normal person.

However, let me tell my hon. friend from Alberta about an experience that I had only two weeks ago. I went up the North Thompson River and stopped in at a ranch. I was surprised to see a "For Sale" sign on the gate. Perhaps one of the saddest days of my life occurred that afternoon. This was a ranch well known to the area, third generation on the land. They had carved out of some pretty rugged country a profitable cattle operation.

• (1810 )

I drove up to the ranch house, knocked on the door and was invited in. I looked into the faces of some of the saddest people I have ever seen. Here was the mother and the father working probably 18 hours a day, seven days a week, to try to keep that ranch going. They had three kids, one teenager and the others were perhaps around eight and ten. They were working after school. They would work all weekend month after month after month to try to keep this small cattle operation going.

They told me that because of the high interest rates of this government, they had to pay interest rates of 15 and 16 per cent. They said: "Nelson, you cannot keep an agricultural operation going with interest rates at 14, 15, 16 or higher per cent." As my hon. friend says, you cannot keep anything going at those rates.

Yet the rates keep going up. This past week we have reached a point where we have the highest rate since 1982. My Conservative friends opposite ought to be remembering what it was like around here in 1981 and 1982. They were on their high horses in here then. Something happens to Tory brains when they cross this

floor. I can remember day after day, ranting and raving and screaming at Allan MacEachen or Marc Lalonde, how horrible they were because the rates had gone up to 10 per cent, and then 11, 12 and 13 per cent. They are higher than that now.

What do I hear from the Conservative benches? I hear nothing, absolutely nothing, rather than that they support this high interest rate policy that is driving not only these ranch families into bankruptcy where they have lost not what they have put into it, but what their grandparents put into that land. They have lost three generations of work because of this government's high interest rate policy. It is a sad day.

We walked out to the farm gate. Here was a pretty rugged individual, and by the time our conversation finished, his eyes were bleary, nearly in tears, because of what he had to do. He could not provide for his family, in spite of working literally day and night for months. Not because of any inadequacy in management, not because of any problem in terms of their desire and willingness to work, but because of this government's high interest rate policy.

They sit there glumly and say: "Aren't we wonderful?". I cannot imagine a single Conservative being elected from the prairies next time. There is an abandonment of the prairies in terms of the farm community. Hundreds and hundreds of farms are for sale, or bankrupt. People are saying: "We are not going bankrupt, we are just walking out. We cannot meet our debt loads." What do we get from this government? It is laughable: a program to make it easier to leave your farm. That is what we get. Not a debt moratorium. No, nothing like that. Not any serious effort at debt restructuring, but a program to get out of agriculture and turn it all over to agri-business. That is the goal now. It is an abandonment of the family farm, the family ranch in this country. It is a very serious situation.

Two Friday's ago, my hon. friend, the member for Mission—Coquitlam, had before this House a private members' initiative for a bill of rights for children. Over the last number of weeks she put together with others a very thoughtful presentation that there are many signs in our country that perhaps people do not respect children. We just saw it today in the news. A family was being evicted because of the nuisance of a child crying.