

Government Orders

would have an effect on Quebec's agricultural economy of between \$24 million and \$46 million. So we were told by the UPA president himself, Laurent Pellerin, when he appeared before the finance committee two weeks ago.

Quebec is offered nothing, even though it is recognized that there is an imbalance that goes back to the end of the last century.

We find it deplorable that this second crop of Liberals are doing exactly the same as the first crop. In 1982 a similar bill was tabled, a bill that provided for compensation to the west. The federal government was not in the financial situation that it finds itself in today, compensation could perhaps have been considered, but no thought was ever given to the negative effect on Quebec producers.

Now, they come back, because that bill was put aside, when Mr. Eugene Whelan was the Minister of Agriculture. At the time, they said: "Since we cannot come to an agreement, we will put it aside".

Today, they come back with this bill, at a time, moreover, when the financial situation is far from rosy, and they want to pay western producers \$2.2 billion as compensation for the elimination of the Crow rate, just like that.

The official opposition is strongly opposed to such a decision, because at a time when the UI funds, the transfers for the underprivileged and the transfers to the provinces are being slashed, the government is able to come up with \$2.2 billion to meet the electoral needs of the few Liberals out west and to try and win over the Reformers' supporters.

We support the elimination of the Crow rate, but it should be eliminated immediately, without any compensation. We also deplore the fact that the Reform members, who are usually so eager to protest when the underprivileged are subsidized, are keeping quiet, because this compensation is being granted to their own constituents. I find that most deplorable.

What I also find deplorable is not only what the Liberals did, but also what the Reformers did. They did not attend the sittings of the finance committee when we talked about ways to improve or to repeal some of the provisions found in Bill C-76. If I were in their shoes today, I would be ashamed to put forward amendments, since they refused to hear anyone, except for a few witnesses from western Canada who are as far to the right as the Reformers have been since the election.

This is totally unacceptable. The decisions of the government concerning the western grain transportation sector are unacceptable, and the attitude of the Reform members in this House is unacceptable.

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Burnaby—Kingsway, health; the hon. member for Québec—Est, Agusta.

[English]

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I want to speak to the group 3 amendments before us which affect the Western Grain Transportation Act, the National Transportation Act and the Crow rate for the future of western farmers.

• (1715)

Reformers said it very clearly during the election campaign. We were not like the Bloc Québécois or the Bloc finance critic who stands up and says that they are going to cut certain things in the House of Commons while back in Quebec they talk about greater and more handouts for the people of Quebec.

There is a continual inconsistency. The hon. member has just spoken as the finance critic for the Bloc Québécois. He talked about not giving the western farmers anything, that the Crow benefit and the Western Grain Transportation Act benefits should be cut off as such. The Bloc wants to cut it off but not give the western farmers any kind of transitional payment whereby they will then take the responsibility of paying the full amount for the freight rate.

Let us look at Quebec. Let us look at some of the tax expenditures that never get raised in the general public. In committee I raised the tax expenditures for the labour venture capital fund, \$360 million in terms of tax expenditures. Three hundred million of that is to the people of Quebec. Other Canadians do not benefit from that tax expenditure. In raising the matter in the finance committee I asked the hon. member what he had to say about that because other Canadians are not getting a fair deal. There is a broad base of Quebecers benefiting from this tax expenditure.

One day the hon. member is against tax expenditure when it supposedly relates to the rich or those who are planning for their estates; the next day when it is in their home political ground, it is a great thing to do. The hon. member should think about that when he talks about the benefits the western farmers are going to get with regard to a payout on the Crow rate.

Let us look at that payout. Most likely, some \$2.2 billion will be paid out over a two year period. What does it amount to in terms of the farmers of western Canada? It is not a major amount of money. It will be a one time payout, most likely of \$16 to \$18 per acre. How much money does that really amount to? What will that do for a farm operation? Not very much when putting fertilizer on irrigated land costs \$40 to \$60 an acre.