

Government Orders

The Government may say it is only a few. I do not care whether it is a few. I know it is not a few, not for farm producers and not for VIA Rail users. Those are important people and important parts of our society which deserve the support that they have been getting both on VIA Rail and particularly on this bill, the Advance Payments Act. These people, the producers and travellers, are not expendable in our economy.

My colleague last night in the House of Commons also suggested that the government, if you want to extend this logic any further, will next be closing down heart support units in this country because only a few people use those as well. I am afraid that, as disgusting as that thought may be, I tend to agree with the suggestion.

The Minister of Agriculture also talked about how the budget cuts have to extend through to the farm sector, and said that the government was not walking away from supporting the farmers of Canada. He is very proud of the distinguished record that the government has had in the past. Again I say, "Oh yeah, some record". We just recognized that we have the most serious financial crisis in agriculture in the history of this country and this government is bragging about all that it has done. It may have put more money into agriculture than any previous government, but that tells me one thing, that no previous government has supported agriculture properly or adequately, and, secondly, because the crisis is still there, that no matter what it has done to this point, it has not been adequate, it has not changed the problem, it has not helped get producers from one time to another.

We still have producers throughout the prairies who are looking to that great crop next year because that is what they need to survive. There have been so many things that have been pushing them down that there is every reason for the Saskatchewan producers to continue to believe that they do live in "next year country". Unfortunately, as long as governments take positions like this, it is always going to be next year country in Saskatchewan because there is nothing that is going to help to get them ahead.

I want to make one more comment on a quote made by the Minister of Agriculture. He said:

We are asking the agriculture sector to do its share and to help overcome Canada's deficit problems. Farmers, like other Canadians,

in the long run will benefit from the action we are taking today to put this country on a sounder financial footing.

Wonderful words, Mr. Speaker, but what he is saying is that the farmers who are left may benefit from the programs that are put in place by this government. I would suggest that there will certainly be no benefit at the farm community level for any of the producers who are sitting there now and dealing with the crisis that has been perpetuated by this and the previous government.

Over the last little while I have had numerous representations from individual farmers within my own riding and from various producer and commodity groups across the country. A number of those groups have suggested that we have to do everything we can to convince this government to maintain the interest free part of the advance payments act. Those groups are wide-ranging across the board, from those who are active in my province to those who are active across the country.

Obviously they have made those pleas to the government on the opposite side of the House. Both ministers who have spoken in this debate, the Minister of Grain and Oilseeds and the Minister of Agriculture, have discounted what they have been told by these major farm organizations. I am afraid I find that much too similar to the other activities that are going on. The government is not listening to the people on the goods and services tax, it is not listening to the people on VIA Rail, and now it is not listening to the interest groups that are active in the industry.

I have information before me from the Ontario Soybean Growers Marketing Board, the Corn Growers Association, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, the Canadian Wheat Board Advisory Committee, the National Farmers' Union and many others, all of whom are saying, maintain the interest free portion of the cash advance. It is crucial to the western farmers to keep the cash flow and keep the grain flowing from the farmer to the elevator to the export market.

• (1610)

I thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to speak in this afternoon's debate and I wish the government well in pursuing its agriculture policies in the future.

Mr. Simmons: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to commend my friend from The Battlefords—Meadow Lake. I have listened with great interest to what he has had to say. Many in this chamber will think of fish when