

Mr. Pepin: It is more of the same.

● (1510)

Mr. Malone: I say to the Minister in all seriousness that it would have been better had the farmer taken his money and invested it elsewhere, even in bank savings. Had the farmers taken that amount of money they could have accumulated since 1979 somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$8,000, had they invested it other than in the Western Grain Stabilization Fund. On the basis of that investment, they are being short-changed by this Government. This Government would try to convince farmers that if they pulled their teeth without anaesthetic it would be good for them. This Bill is like building a three-wire fence to keep birds out. It does not offer the farmers the protection they believed they were buying in 1976.

It is important to talk about the philosophy of the Western Grain Stabilization Plan and the reason such stabilization is necessary today. Canadians know that farm producers have existed in this country since the very first person arrived on the North American continent. What is significantly different in the last half of this country's existence are the changes in the economic dynamics of agriculture, such that farmers today can no longer afford to have a crop loss.

As a Member of Parliament who was born and raised on a farm, and had some experience with the great depression years, I find it interesting that at that time, as in all previous times in history of the world up until the recent past, depressed times do not drive people off farms. In fact, the depression drove people to the farms. The pictures of people riding the boxcars in the thirties do not show people flooding to the cities. Those were city dwellers riding the boxcars back to the farm. On the farm their brother, uncle or some other relative had a cow, a chicken and a pig. Bessie gave milk, the chicken gave eggs, and the pig provided pork. They had a vegetable garden. Once the farmland was paid for, you could not starve them off it.

The nature of agriculture has significantly changed. We are into specialized industries, single commodity production. Input costs have risen so dramatically that agriculture today simply cannot afford a crop failure. We are still in the same cycle of boom and bust. We should not interfere with that cycle. It is the natural market forces at work. The farmers expected that the Western Grain Stabilization Plan would be a system of equalization so that in boom years they could put money aside and in the bust years they could draw upon that account and have some stability in their industry.

What do we have in 1983 and 1984? We have the absolute epitome of bust. What do we get from this Government? We get a year of delay in bringing about a system of payment. The Government has the cock-eyed notion that somehow the formula could not be changed sooner, even though it knew it had the support of the Opposition Parties. It would have been a simple one-day procedure to make that change. Instead, they bring it out on election eve for political gain. What a sinister fact to put before western grain farmers. As I said before, this is not just a farm issue. There is not a single person in this

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country who does not eat daily. Farming today is not a lifestyle. These are business people in the business of food production.

We need to readdress the whole concept of agriculture. Looking at the world facts, there is no industry as important as farming. Four-fifths of the world population suffers from malnutrition, 70 million per year suffer permanent and irreversible brain damage from lack of protein and 40,000 children a day die of starvation. That was 40,000 children yesterday, 40,000 today and 40,000 tomorrow.

Against that background, there is not one nation in the world that gives top priority to agriculture. In this country, as in many other countries, ranking along the lowest priorities are agriculture, fisheries and forestry. This world will one day wake up to the fact that it is not the industrial centres that make this country tick.

I know why we are in this kind of situation. Most farmers in Canada know why this is the case. In Canada there are more Members of Parliament from Montreal and Toronto than there are from Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Northwest Territories, Yukon and British Columbia, excepting the Fraser Valley and City of Vancouver, combined. The people in two cities have more voting power as to how this country is run than those in 70 per cent of our land mass. They are nice people in Montreal and Toronto. You, Mr. Speaker, might be from that area.

Mr. Cosgrove: Your leader comes from there.

Mr. Malone: My Leader does come from there, but he is advantaged. One-third of his caucus comes from the Prairies and represent western farming. There are 21 Members of Parliament from Alberta. The Liberal Party of Canada has 21 Members in eight provinces and two territories. The balance are from Quebec and Ontario.

The Member says that my Leader comes from Montreal. However, he has the influence of Prairie people who feed people in Montreal and Toronto. He has respect for the Western Grain Stabilization Plan. That is why he stood in this House of Commons to raise the issue with the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). It became a national issue. It was only then that we got action on the Western Grain Stabilization Plan. The Hon. Member says that is right. My Leader has a sensitivity for the issue. Now it is being resolved, unfortunately a year and a half too late.

Farmers all across this country, not just in the west, are receiving commodity prices equal to those of 1973, but their input costs have increased since that time by 150 per cent. Agriculture Canada tells us that by 1988, just four years from now, they will go up another 110 per cent. What a devastating set of conditions. My friends to my far left, the NDP, would not allow any labour group to fall so far behind. However, the food producers who feed this whole country—and we should bear in mind there are only two sources of food, soil and water—have fallen behind with input costs increasing 150 per cent, and another 110 per cent projected by 1988, with virtually every commodity price falling. That is the devastating