

Government Orders

Mr. Crawford: Well, they have stolen many things.

The plans they said they had, the cuts that were never mentioned are things I find hard to believe. But I do thank the hon. member for the question. I would like to compose myself as I became a little excited over the many things this government has done wrong, the promises broken.

Mr. Arseneault: I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Kent on his fine speech. He really set out some of the problems and the impacts that cutting back this program will cause not only in Atlantic Canada but in central Canada.

As the hon. member probably knows, the provinces in Atlantic Canada are now suffering severely. There is a fisheries crisis not only in the offshore but inshore as well. There is high unemployment, we have cut-backs in ACOA, we have a problem with VIA Rail, where the Conservative government has shown no heart and has cut back. We had a recent announcement by the minister regarding cut-backs in summer training programs for university students. Again, there is the threat of cuts in transfer payments. I would like to ask the hon. member to confirm that this program will have a very negative impact, not only on the Atlantic provinces but on central Canada as well.

Mr. Crawford: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. For the farmers of my area of southwestern Ontario, which I have referred to as central Canada, this will be devastating. We like to think of our area, and especially my own riding, as the garden valley of Canada. It has the richest land, and great weather, for Canada.

Almost every day in my area, as in the eastern provinces, farmers are going bankrupt because they cannot compete with programs such as this. Yesterday, the market for corn was \$2.66 a bushel and it costs \$2.82 a bushel to grow. How can they survive? And then these programs are cancelled. Interest is now being charged on the advance payment for crops program. If a farmer cannot afford to store his crop, he cannot afford to pay interest. If he is going to pay interest, the bank wants the money. How can he afford to put up storage bins? I have neighbours who are in the business of building storage bins. They are losing this run-off from the one point of cutting back and amending the act to say we have to pay

interest on the loans. It mushrooms for people. They are losing their living through their agricultural losses.

I do not believe there will be any agricultural grants left after the budget today. The farmers now pay gasoline taxes. We are competing under the free trade. I have not even got into the free trade issue. My riding is on the border and I know what free trade is doing to us in our area. The city of Chatham has over 12 per cent unemployment so we are starting to equal the Atlantic provinces. We are supposed to be one of the richest areas of Ontario and yet we have over 12 per cent unemployment.

We are so close to the border the companies that are owned—and they are 90 per cent owned by American firms—are taking their companies back, laying employees off here and upping production in the States. All this around the agriculture industry and the grants that the government has dropped.

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Madam Speaker, I would like to place on the record a few brief remarks concerning Bill C-26 and the action taken under that bill to remove the so-called at and east subsidy. Being a representative of the port of Halifax I think it is particularly fitting that I add my comments because it is the port of Halifax and the farmers in the agricultural industry of Nova Scotia that are primarily affected by the divisions of this bill.

Of course, there is a profound effect in the port of Saint John and other areas of Atlantic Canada, but I think the very specific effect of this bill falls within the port of Halifax and the agricultural industry. It is important that the person representing some of those interests express a view in the House of Commons.

Bill C-26 is reality. We on the government side are facing the realities of our economy in Atlantic Canada. I am sure even the member for Kent recognizes that when subsidies are utilized, there is a distortion that takes place that can have an undesirable effect. That is exactly what has happened over the past 25 years and more with respect to the at and east subsidies.

The at and east subsidy was initially conceived as a method of allowing east cost ports within Canada to compete with ports on the east coast of the United States. The purpose of the subsidy was to balance the cost of grain and flour shipments eastward primarily for the export markets. Nobody would deny that it was an