

Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act

Community. Canadian farmers have been productive and the Government has recognized that. The Prime Minister said to Canadian farmers through the Throne Speech that he will spare no effort in assisting the farmers through this difficult period.

What has been the record of the Conservative Government? We moved on western grain stabilization. We are now moving on advance payments. We moved quickly during the very difficult drought. I can personally attest to the fact that the Prime Minister asked me to communicate with him on a daily basis about the problems the farmers were facing with the drought. The Prime Minister wanted to know what the situation was on a daily basis. The Government responded. I believe the example of the Saskatchewan election attested to that in a very positive way.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Absolutely.

Mr. Gustafson: The Hon. Member for Saskatoon West (Mr. Hnatyshyn) agrees. The farmers know who has been their voice in Ottawa. The farmers know that the Prime Minister has stood in the gap for them. Members of the Opposition tried to say that the drought assistance and deficiency payments were not new money. They tried to defuse the issue and the more they tried to defuse it, the more it became an issue. The farmers of Saskatchewan sent a strong message to Regina and they are sending a strong message of support to Ottawa.

When dealing with this Bill today, we are dealing with priorities. As a farmer, as Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and as one who has seen the positive work the Prime Minister has done, I ask opposition Members if they are saying that food is or is not a priority. In the eyes of the Government, food is a priority. Agriculture is a priority in Canada and it must remain a priority so that it may become strong and help build this great country.

Certainly we are facing a difficult time. Agriculture is facing problems. However, the Government is taking up the challenge to meet these difficulties and face them in a positive way. The Government is facing them in a way that will benefit all Canadians, not only farmers.

We often forget that when a farmer spends money buying machinery, improving buildings, buying parts for implements or buying the many other things which are needed, the entire economy of Canada is stimulated. I have heard the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Mazankowski) say many times in the House that money spent on agriculture benefits all of Canada some 25 times in roll-over benefits. It benefits Ontario, Quebec and the rest of Canada. Therefore, it is very important that agriculture be a priority.

Not only in Canada but in all of North America, as agriculture has been strong, the country has progressed in a positive way. We must never lose track of that. Agriculture must be a top priority. It was made a top priority in the Speech from the Throne and it was made a top priority in the Tokyo

summit where the Prime Minister laid out the importance of the situation relating to agriculture and its international sales before the nations gathered there. The Government and the Prime Minister will continue to lay before the international market-place the importance of agriculture.

We just signed a significant agreement with Russia for 25 million tonnes. This is a sale which will benefit not only farmers but all of Canada. These are the kinds of agreements for which we are looking and these are the kinds of agreements we must have in order to initiate the strength in agriculture that can help build this great country.

Before I resume my seat, I wish to say one more thing about agriculture and food being a priority. We in Canada have a large surplus of grain on our farms. We must give credit to the farmers for producing this grain. As well, we have been blessed with the moisture required to produce so much grain this year. On the other hand, there are places in this old world where there are starving people. I believe that food is a priority and this requires an educational process. Certainly every man, woman and child in this world has a right to eat. This comes from a farmer's heart. A farmer understands, as do all Canadians, that we have obligations but we also have some great opportunities.

I had the opportunity to represent Canada at the World Food Conference in Rome. I do not think there is a country in the world that is respected more than Canada, not only for the way we have responded in agriculture but certainly for the way we responded in offering food aid around the world. Through the Canadian food grain bank, the people in the Prairies are collecting grain right now to be shipped to underprivileged countries. This is a great challenge for Canada and we take no back seat in what the Government and the people of Canada have accomplished. They have realized that a great need exists to make food a priority. However, it can only become a priority if agriculture is strong and if the Government sees it as a priority.

We all must see the importance of the fact that everyone in this world has a right to eat. I suggest that it is an obligation not only of the Government but of the Opposition and every Canadian to see that food becomes a priority.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question of my colleague. He will know—

Mr. Nystrom: Sock it to him!

Mr. Lewis: I intend to. This is going to be tough and I think you may enjoy it.

During the Saskatchewan election, the Hon. Member for Yorkton—Melville (Mr. Nystrom) made a lot of noise about the Prime Minister's credibility. He suggested that the election results would put that question to rest. In fact, he staked his meager reputation on that one question. I would like my friend to enlighten the House as to how the credibility of our friend from Yorkton—Melville stood up when he staked his reputation on the theory that the farmers of Saskatchewan would