

that you are in a difficult position but you do not know what to do so you have taken it out on the beef producers of Alberta.

I would like to direct the government leader's attention to the farm credit crisis and the statement made by the Minister of Agriculture of Alberta, LeRoy Fjordbotten, when he said:

—new options for farm credit should be a national priority.

He also said that in my province:

—bankruptcies have risen 17 per cent . . . 26 per cent of the 9,000 ADC loans were in arrears.

The Minister of Agriculture in that province asked for a joint meeting of agriculture ministers and that this item be placed high on the agenda.

I wonder if the leader would draw this to the attention of his colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, and ask him to convene an emergency meeting of his provincial counterparts with respect to the farm credit crisis.

**Hon. Duff Roblin (Leader of the Government):** My honourable friend can attribute to me as much as he likes an inability to deal with agricultural problems world-wide, and he would be quite correct because I do not have the ability to deal with those problems. But I do know that the government will deal with those problems as they affect Canada, and, as Canada takes part in that process, it will be with wisdom, judgment and, I hope, success. I do not back down one inch from my defence of Canadian agricultural interests simply because my honourable friend wants to ascribe to me or this government responsibility for a world-wide situation.

Regarding the farm credit crisis, he ought to know that in recent days the government reduced by 1 per cent and more the rates for agricultural credit across this country insofar as the federal agricultural credit situation is concerned.

**Senator Olson:** The bank rate went down; everybody understands that.

**Senator Roblin:** That has reduced the rate of interest, and if that does not help farmers in Canada who borrow money, I do not know what will.

With respect to the request that a meeting be convened, my honourable friend can rest assured that my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, is fully aware of the suggestions he receives from his provincial counterparts. His custom is to respond to those suggestions in an adequate and satisfactory manner.

**Senator Hastings:** Will the leader assure the Senate that he will bring this matter to the attention of the Minister of Agriculture and ask him to call a meeting of his provincial counterparts to deal with this situation, and see that it is high on the agenda, as the Minister of Agriculture of Alberta has requested?

Would the leader also ask the Minister of Agriculture whether he would also put on that agenda the \$50 million cut in agricultural programs contained in the budget?

[Senator Hastings.]

**Senator Roblin:** My honourable friend can rely on the present Minister of Agriculture to perform the functions of his office properly and efficiently without any prodding from me.

**Senator Frith:** You are not going to do that? You refuse to talk it over with your colleague?

**Senator Walker:** You're a bunch of soreheads. You should be ashamed of yourselves.

**Senator Frith:** Look who's talking!

## ONTARIO

### TORNADO DAMAGE—GOVERNMENT ACTION

**Hon. Hartland de M. Molson:** Honourable senators, is the Leader of the Government able to tell the Senate what plans the federal government has for the relief of victims of the tornados which went through Barrie and other parts of Ontario recently?

As we are all aware, the Government of Ontario has put in place certain plans, and the funds offered by the public for relief have been centralized into what I believe is called the Central Ontario Disaster Fund. The Barrie municipal authorities have also been very active, as have the Chambers of Commerce, the Rotary Clubs and others. There has also been tremendous help from individuals and from groups such as the Mennonites, but I have not heard what the federal government is going to do to relieve these people who have suffered so greatly. I understand that 600 homes have been severely damaged, with over 200 damaged beyond repair, which has led to great distress.

I should like to know if the government has a plan, and if so, what it is.

**Hon. Duff Roblin (Leader of the Government):** Honourable senators, I know that my honourable friend speaks from special knowledge of the situation, so I appreciate the question he has put. I must tell him that he has caught me flat-footed, because while I know that there has been a communication between the federal government and the Government of Ontario respecting the disaster, I do not know what has happened or, indeed, whether any requests were made. I will find that out for him.

## THE BUDGET

### ATLANTIC PROVINCES—IMPACT OF MEASURES

**Hon. John B. Stewart:** Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. We have just heard questions respecting the disaster in the west and the disaster in Ontario. I should like to draw the attention of the Leader of the Government in the Senate to the Atlantic provinces.

According to the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council, the Atlantic region, too, has recently suffered a disaster, but it was not an act of God; it might be called an act of Wilson or an act of Mulroney, if you wish.