

Government would adopt some of the recommendations made by the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition which were put to the Government today, it would prove it recognized, for instance, the seriousness of the western drought situation which occurred this past summer. If the Government would implement an acreage payment system at \$50 per seeded acre, in co-operation with the provincial Governments, that would be very beneficial to western agriculture.

Someone on the Government side made the suggestion to the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition that this is going to be a very expensive program, and, yes, it could be, but we should look at the magnitude of the situation which has occurred in western Canada. It is estimated that there was at least \$2 billion in lost profits because of the drought alone. The damp, wet harvest also reduced grain production and will reduce the value of crops. In those cases, that kind of a payment, I am sure the Hon. member for Regina West would appreciate, would be very useful.

There should be a permanent disaster relief mechanism in place to assist in the kind of disaster which has happened to the farmers this year. There needs to be long-term action on water storage, water conservation and irrigation which will put on a firm basis the agricultural industry in western Canada. I am sure that the Hon. Member for Regina West would certainly want to applaud and support in any way possible those and other recommendations of the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Albert Cooper (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to participate in this debate today for a number of reasons. Of course, the first reason has to be that agriculture is a very fundamental part of the economy of my constituency. It provides a livelihood and opportunity for many people in my area. In fact, it is a major influence on all of us in Canada. The second reason I wanted to speak in the debate today is because of the motion which is before us. I would just like to read the motion, if I may:

That this House regrets that the Government has refused to recognize the serious crisis facing the farm family in Canada and condemns the Government for its inadequate response to the problems of Canadian farmers, including a severe cost-price squeeze and debt burden, fierce predatory international competition and natural disasters, which have combined to place Canada's agricultural community in jeopardy.

That is quite a motion, Mr. Speaker, but I will tell you what really makes it incredible. It is the Party which has put this motion before the House. I was elected to Parliament in 1980 so I was able to watch the previous administration and perceive how it dealt with agricultural concerns, problems and frustrations. Today those same people put forward a motion condemning our Government for not paying attention to these problems and not acting upon them. All one has to do is look at the two records to see that the people who are doing the criticizing today really have no grounds, basis or reason for putting forward any of that criticism. I can remember sitting in this House and watching the Minister with the green hat making all sorts of statements, all sorts of flowery speeches, but not once that I can recall did he really respond to the gut needs of people in the Peace River country. I remember

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questioning him about problems we had in Peace River, whether it was drought or some other weather condition, and his response was: Check it out with the province. He was not interested. Yet these very same people turn around and have the audacity to put forward this kind of motion. In spite of that I have to say that I have found this debate quite interesting and the speeches information and thoughtful. That is a real compliment to Members of this House and in many ways to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise). He set the tone.

● (1550)

I want to talk for a few moments now about this new Government. It is important that I talk about it from the viewpoint of a western Canadian, particularly as the Member of Parliament representing the Peace country. This new Government has meant many significant things to us. The first thing which comes to mind is that for the first time in a long time we feel we are represented at the Cabinet table. Time and time again in the past our concerns, worries and frustrations were never heard. Why? Because the Liberals did not have anyone from western Canada to stand up and speak for us. That is not the case today. We have several Members from western Canada sitting at that Cabinet table demonstrating concern about the problems we are faced with in western Canada. At the same time they very much influence the direction Canada is taking. I could not help but notice an article in *Quorum* which I thought really spoke to this fact. Some of you may remember Mordecai Richler's statement regarding the City of Edmonton. Western Canadians were very offended by what one Member said because what they felt was happening was now that the Liberals are in Opposition they are free to come forward with all sorts of platitudes and nice statements but when they were in Government they totally ignored us. The title of the article was: "Shame on Sheila". It said, among other things:

If she feels compelled to apologize to us, why doesn't she express her profound regret for her Party's unabashed attempt to loot Alberta with the National Energy Policy?

That is the kind of thing which has made western Canadians furious. We find it particularly offensive when Liberals come forward with this kind of motion today criticizing a Government which is looking at the problems facing our farmers and is already taking action and considering further action.

I now want to talk briefly about the Ministers who deal with agriculture in this Government. The first thing we have to remember is that those Ministers were handed one heck of a mess in the shape of our agricultural economy. It has suffered from neglect, severe weather conditions, and all sorts of other things. Of course, the biggest thing it suffered from was the inaction of the previous Government. What I found really impressive was that the Minister of Agriculture listens. That is important. In my first four or five years in this House when I sat on the Opposition side I never felt that the Minister of Agriculture listened to me, let alone my constituents. However, the new Minister of Agriculture is listening and responding, and anyone who wants to seriously sit down and look at it will know that the Minister has listened and his track record