

find out what sort of aid package could be given to agriculture. He made some rather vague reference to that accumulated package being something in the order of \$1 billion. He did not say whether that was to be \$1 billion of new money from the federal Government, whether it was to come from the provinces, or whether it was to come from a combination of provinces, farm groups and the federal Government. So we are still not much clearer than we were before, in spite of the fact that members of the Government from the Prairies created a big expectation that we would be hearing something about the almost \$2 billion deficiency payment once the Speech from the Throne was delivered. I expect Members representing portions of rural Canada did the same thing. However, since I live in the Prairies I know what members of the Government were doing there. While Parliament was recessed nothing was done except getting ready for this statement. Expectations were high. I must be frank with Hon. Members, there is a great deal of disappointment in rural Canada because it is not known where the Government stands on this issue.

The Government made some strong statements in this Speech from the Throne concerning the subsidization of agricultural products. We are no longer clear whether it is carrying the criticism of other countries' subsidy programs to the point where it will start living up to the policy line it has been preaching abroad by refusing to extend subsidies to Canadian farmers. The Prime Minister has not made that clear. Nor has the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) been particularly helpful. I do not think he has been given any clues at all by his cabinet colleagues in this respect.

During the course of the Prime Minister's speech today I sent a note to the Minister of Agriculture in which I asked: "Does this mean that you have now \$1 billion to put on the table in these talks with farmers' organizations and the provinces?" I have a good rapport with the Minister. He usually keeps me right up to date with respect to what he is doing and what he is able to do. He did not even look up and smile to indicate that he had received my note, although I saw him read it. He did not indicate that he had matters in hand. He did not even reply to my note. After the Prime Minister's speech I phoned the Minister's office and found that his officials were quite confused with respect to the so-called \$1 billion statement that had come out of the Prime Minister's speech. They did not know anything about it. They had not had briefings in that respect. They had received no word about it. In fact, they knew absolutely nothing about it.

We know that provincial agricultural officials are meeting in Toronto today for the second time concerning this and other subjects. Those officials do not seem to have any knowledge of there being \$1 billion on the table. The whole matter is very confusing. It is very well couched in fuzzy terms, which is something we expect from Speeches from the Throne. However, sometimes when we have explanations from the leader of the country we expect the fuzziness to clear up, particularly when it concerns an issue such as this, which is

important to hundreds of thousands of farm families right across the nation.

One of the threads that runs through the speech is one that is usually found in any successful political statement given in Canada. I refer to the issue of regional disparity. I began my remarks dealing with agriculture since that is the first subject dealt with in the Speech from the Throne. I also began with it because it is one of my chief interests.

When talking about regional disparity I think that we must consider that agriculture, fisheries and forestry are areas of our economy which have been traditional bases and that they are now in trouble. They are sectors of the economy which have been having some difficulty. They have been lending to regional disparity, which has once again been showing itself in our land. When the Prime Minister spoke about my region of the country, western Canada, he said that he had steadfast faith that we can build that part of the country. I have always had faith that we can build that part of the country. My parents have always had faith that they could build that part of the country, as did my grandparents and a few of my great-grandparents. Many of them felt they had built that part of the country. They thought that they had pretty well completed it.

I received a phone call today from a gentleman who happens to live in my riding. He is dealing with this same problem. He thought that he had built up a rather successful farm. He is now middle-aged. He has served on a number of boards in his community, including the review boards put together by the Province of Saskatchewan to decide whether or not farmers should be allowed to face bankruptcy. He now finds himself in the position of having to go before a federal board to decide whether or not he has any future left in farming. This is a man who was using new, up to date technology. It is the kind of technology we would expect would keep one competitive on an export basis, but he is about to go down the tube. He bought his land, some 30 quarter sections or about 4,800 hectares, in the 1970s, just before valuation day. He told me that if he sells out or turns his assets over to the bank, under Saskatchewan law he would be able to take one vehicle and some household furniture. His vehicles are now quite old. If he is able to turn those assets into money and the bank is able to get its money, something like \$1.5 million worth of assets will be turned over. The land part of those assets before 1970 had a relatively low price, and it will be valued for tax purposes at that original price. He has been told by his accountant that although he is entitled to receive a \$500,000 tax free capital gains from his assets, he will still owe the Department of National Revenue something like \$90,000 when it is all over and if he sells them for enough to pay off the bank. That is for a lifetime of work! This person has contributed 3.5 decades to growth in that part of the country. The message being sent out is that modern technology in his kind of expertise—and he is a very well trained agriculturalist—is no longer necessary. The marketplace will not sustain that kind of economy.