

That he will call the attention of the Senate to the need for a comprehensive financial support program for agricultural producers, especially cereal grain producers, to compensate for the drastic lowering of cereal grain market prices.

He said: Honourable senators, I raised this question about a farm financing package a few days ago, because when the announcement was made by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Agriculture, I was unable to obtain any background information, and I mentioned that at that time. Since then I have received a package from the Minister of Agriculture that contains not only in some detail the particular parts of the financial program that was being offered to Canadian agriculture but, indeed, some reasonably good background information sheets on each. If the package had been provided to senators—and I do not blame the leadership in the Senate, because I asked the leader before we came into the Senate that day if he could help me, and he, too, claimed, properly so, that he did not have the package either—we would not be spending time on this matter today.

Honourable senators, I do not want to spend a lot of time today complaining, but this government, for whatever reason, does not seem to think that senators have a right to background information. This is the most severe experience I have had in attempting to get background information. I had to go to one of my colleagues in the Liberal Party and obtain his information kit and get it photocopied. Although I was told that these background information kits were being distributed in the Centre Block, none was distributed to senators' offices that day or even the next day. I hope that in the future we will not have to raise this problem again.

In any event, honourable senators, there are three subjects I need further information on. I understand that Senator Barootes is ready, willing and able to provide that. The first relates to the Special Grains Program. It says in this background information that that will be extended to the 1987 crop year. The package goes on to explain that the amount will be \$1.1 billion for the 1987 crop year.

That is welcome news. I might say that while it is not as much as the premiers asked for at the meeting in Humboldt, Saskatchewan, or at several other meetings, it is welcome and it is a fairly significant amount. It is not enough to completely substitute for the reduction in the price of grain, and perhaps it could be argued that it is not as much as European farmers are receiving from their governments by way of subsidies, but I do want to acknowledge that it is a significant amount.

Perhaps Senator Barootes could tell us if farmers can look forward to this program being extended into subsequent years, as long as the subsidy war between the United States and Europe continues to keep international prices depressed.

It is very clear in the background papers that that is the reason the government advances for extending the program into the 1987 crop year, and I accept that. But I also realize that the possibility of these depressed prices, particularly for cereal grains, is likely to continue into 1988 also. Perhaps

Senator Barootes could tell us whether the government is, in fact, giving a commitment that it will stand by the farmers and continue with this financial support package as long as other governments cause depressed international prices because of subsidy wars.

When the Minister of State (Finance) appeared before the Senate in the Committee of the Whole this morning on Bill C-101, he explained in great detail what they are doing with the farm fuel rebates, and I appreciated that. Therefore, I will not raise that matter now.

I now get down to my third concern, and that relates to the Farm Debt Review Boards. It says that they will also be "extended from August 1988 to 1991." It then states:

The extension represents a federal commitment of about \$40 million.

Can Senator Barootes tell us what the \$40 million will be used for? I do not know.

Senator Barootes: Would you repeat that?

Senator Olson: The third point in the Summary of Initiatives states:

Farm Debt Review Boards will be extended from August 1988 to 1991.

Further down it states:

The extension represents a federal commitment of about \$40 million.

I do not know what the federal government is going to use the \$40 million for. I assume it will be to help people who are having difficulty with their debts. I know that the Farm Debt Review Boards look at individual applications for assistance, but how they will apply and use \$40 million is not explained.

So we leave it at that, but then the next point says:

—the Farm Credit Corporation was provided with special funding of \$30 million.

It says that this will be used in conjunction or in connection with the FDRB. Is it \$70 million, or is the \$30 million there for some other reason? I need an explanation on that.

Then it says:

The FCC's Commodity Based Loans Program will receive funding to offer additional loans until 1991 totalling \$450 million at interest rates as low as six per cent.

I want to know how that will be administered, how it will be applied for, and who qualifies for it. That is not explained in the background information package. If that is a shortfall in the information package provided to us, that is fine. I do not know of any loans now at 6 per cent, but perhaps Senator Barootes has been able to find that out.

Honourable senators, there is an innocuous sentence that says:

Amendments to the act will be introduced to increase the producer levy rate.

I think they pay 2 per cent of their gross receipts now. I have heard it said that that might be increased to 5 per cent. That little sentence is stuffed in the middle. That is a 150 per