

Oral Questions

told them that their farm programs are unethical and unchristian, and called them pip-squeaks.

Mr. Axworthy: What's the answer?

Mr. Mayer: We want to have on-going dialogue with them in order to attain results, rather than just going outside the country and calling people names.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PRIME MINISTER'S POSITION

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister who made very specific promises to western farmers. Yesterday's announcement by the Government will mean a net loss in income for prairie grain farmers of \$1 billion a year. That, added to their present burden, means that their income this year will be less than zero—zilch. Given the promises the Prime Minister made in the last election, why has he abandoned the western Canadian farmer?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we are certainly aware of the fact that there is a serious problem in western Canada as it affects commodity prices. That is why the Government has worked so hard, with almost 100 initiatives since it was sworn in, to be of assistance to the agricultural sector in western Canada in particular. In fact it is widely known in western Canada that if there is a Farmers' Party in the country, it is the Progressive Conservative Party.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Axworthy: It used to be. It's not any more.

Mr. Benjamin: It's the Dirty Eighties.

Mr. Mulroney: We have introduced capital gains tax exemptions, the Agricultural Stabilization Act, the Western Grain Stabilization Act, the Western Grain Transportation Act, and advance payments for crops. We have given substantial assistance to farmers in western Canada. It is not enough, we are going to do more, and with the help of all Members of the House we will be able to do so in the—

● (1425)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, as a result of this so-called Farmers' Party, as described by the Prime Minister, 40,000 Canadian farmers are on the verge of bankruptcy. That was before yesterday's announcement, without considering the effects of that announcement.

Almost two years ago to the day in this House the Prime Minister said: "It is typical of the Government that when the interests of western Canada are involved it is always tied to

something else. No wonder western Canada won't trust them as far as they can throw them." He said that about the Liberals. Why was that any more true of the Liberals then than it is of the Conservatives today?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Because, Mr. Speaker, the Liberals, with the help of their sweethearts in the NDP, crushed the western farmers. We brought them back to life.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mulroney: That is the difference between a socialist and a Liberal and us. We have brought in dozens upon dozens of measures designed to reward the productivity of the western farmer. The western farmer knows full well that we have been helpful and others have been less so. He knows full well that when he is looking for a friend in Ottawa, he looks to the Progressive Conservative Government.

GOVERNMENT POLICY

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): He may have looked to the Conservative Party in the last election but he sure will not in the next election.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Don't bet Bob White on that.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, what is there in the Conservative Party's philosophy that could cause Government in one weekend last year to find \$1 billion for the banks but this year take \$1 billion out of the pockets of the prairie farmer?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we have put almost \$3 billion into the agricultural sector since this Government was elected. We indicated that we believe this, while helpful, is not enough and we hope to do more. The Hon. Member raises the question about the distinctions between this Government and others. This Government did not give the farmers 20 per cent interest rates, and this Government did not tell the farmers to go sell their own wheat.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

REQUEST FOR INTERIM PAYMENT UNDER WESTERN GRAIN STABILIZATION ACT

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of State for the Wheat Board. He said that his announcement yesterday was bad news. For most western farmers it is considered a total disaster. Since the initial wheat payment will not even cover the cost of production for many young farmers teetering on the brink of bankruptcy, is the Minister prepared to make a commitment right now to a \$1 billion payment from the Western Grain Stabilization Fund?