

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Ferguson:** Simcoe, too. I do not doubt that at all. Most of the rich people from Toronto own homes up in Simcoe County. A lot of the very wealthy ones are up there, and they do not get hit as hard as the rest, but I would suggest that the Minister of Transport should go out and talk to the real down to earth farmers, the ones who make their livelihood out of the soil.

The government knows that if these farmers are forced to come back to the Hill to demonstrate again, there will be double the number that were here last November. At that time, there were between 12,000 and 13,000, according to the figures that were obtained from some of our institutions on the Hill. *La Presse* said 15,000. *The Ottawa Citizen* said 13,000, but the figures we have indicate between 12,000 and 13,000, most of them from the province of Quebec, but quite a number from the province of Ontario as well. If they come back, they will hold the government accountable for what has happened to agriculture since the fall of 1984 when it took over.

Passing an Order in Council to prevent the people of this country from demonstrating on the Hill is not acceptable when we have the economic conditions that we have here in the farm sector today.

When I was a young person going to school, I used to hear my father talk about the tough times under the Bennett government. The farmers from across Canada came by railway and every other means possible to demonstrate on the Hill. Their demonstrations proved to be effective because back at that time we had the various boards come into place. They gave the farmers control over what they are selling and the returns they had to have, and took it out of the hands of a few very large corporate people who were making excessive profits.

One of the problems that producers have today is that they do not have VIA Rail any more. The government cut that off too to keep them away from the Hill here, so they could not demonstrate.

**An Hon. Member:** Some 2,700 people down the tube.

**Mr. Ferguson:** That is right.

We heard the Premier of Saskatchewan saying last week that a third of their farmers are in extremely difficult positions and may go down the tubes. That is a

third of all farmers, 21,000 in Saskatchewan is a third of their farmers, and another third in difficult problems.

I ask you to listen to what the Minister of Finance said in his 1989 budget. It is on page 15 of his budget speech. He said that a rebalancing of the costs of this program will result in a federal saving of \$90 million in 1988-89 and \$110 million in 1990-91. What we are seeing today is the result of that statement. A massive cutback at this time, when the farmers are facing such harsh economic conditions out there, and now their operating loans are cutting off, it is neither acceptable nor can it be condoned.

Clearly the Minister of Finance sees this as a cost cutting measure, with the federal government's share of the program being cut. Of course this past Wednesday the Minister of Agriculture told the House that this is not a cutback on the government's share of crop insurance costs. Let us look at the effects of the program's new funding arrangements.

The provinces share the cost of crop insurance, and their share will increase. For example, the cost to Prince Edward Island is going to increase from \$150,000 a year to \$650,000 a year. That is a half a million dollar increase—a whopping 333 per cent. Producers' costs will increase as well. In some cases the producers' costs will increase by close to 50 per cent.

As we heard earlier, the federal government will spend \$200 million less on crop insurance over the next two years. How can it possibly say that the \$200 million is not a cutback? Last December, when this legislation came before the House, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture told the House that one of the major reasons for the change of crop insurance was: "We have provided a more equitable rate for sharing the cost of insurance premiums".

It is easy for two of the three partners in the program to get together and say: "Look, we will share one-half of the cost and leave the other guys alone because they are not here." It is easy for them to make such an arrangement when that third party is not at the table and is not involved in these negotiations. This is exactly what happened. The producers were not present when this agreement was arrived at.

Indeed, the members used the terms "equitable" or "balanced" more than half a dozen times to describe the changes in the premium funding arrangements. If the member listened to the witnesses when this bill was before the committee and took the time to read their