

• (1450)

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Bill Attewell (Markham—Whitchurch—Stouffville): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration. I feel too many people with criminal records enter Canada before we discover their sordid past. Robert Blackwood, an alleged drug gang leader who was thrown out of the U.S. and Great Britain, is one example. He was finally ordered deported from Canada for criminal activities. His expensive two-year appeal process cost Canadian taxpayers well over \$100,000.

What measures will the minister take to ensure that criminals who enter Canada illegally are deported quickly to protect society and to minimize costs to taxpayers?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raises a very important question that concerns many Canadians. That is why the measures in Bill C-86, an act to amend the Immigration Act, go a long way toward protecting Canadian society against individuals whose admission would be contrary to the best interests of Canada or any community in Canada.

The amendments to the act will go a long way to deal with the problem of admissibility. Those provisions have been expanded to better protect Canadians. Thanks to his caucus colleagues and to the other place, that should become law in the next two days, I hope—unfortunately without the support of the Liberal Party.

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WESTERN GRAIN TRANSPORTATION ACT

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture.

Western farmers felt betrayed by the minister when he slashed the Western Grain Transportation Act by some \$73 million for next year alone. This will increase their shipping costs by over 20 per cent.

Why is the government slashing this statutory program which has a direct impact on farm income? Why is he doing this at a time when many farmers have had poor crops and are already facing a bleak cold winter? Why?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member was here when the Minister of Finance presented his economic plan. That economic plan called for reductions in expenditures of the Government of Canada over the period of that plan of some \$8-plus billions. Agriculture and other sectors of Canadian society are making a contribution to the stability of this country. The hon. member knows that when you look at the debt held by agriculture of over \$20 billion, at least when you reduce the interest costs to agriculture you save producers over \$100 million. Every 1 per cent reduction in the interest rate saves \$100 million.

Yes, it was difficult. Grants and contributions, not only from the Department of Agriculture, but other departments have been reduced by 10 per cent, in a deficit reduction of some \$8 billion.

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, western farmers feel not only betrayed but devastated. Charlie Swanson, the president of the Manitoba Wheat Pool, described the cuts as “devastating news for prairie grain farmers”.

In view of the terrible impact that this is going to have on these producers—this is a statutory program, the minister cannot change it without changing the legislation—will he rescind this decision right now and show some consideration for the desperate situation that many producers are facing this fall and coming winter?

Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I think in my reply to my colleague's first question I outlined the necessity.

No. The Department of Agriculture is making a contribution to the stability of this country for the benefit of every citizen, including farmers. The hon. member will know that the safety nets of GRIP and NISA, the cash flow enhancement, cash advance, all have been maintained for the benefit of agriculture.

The hon. member also recognizes that interest costs for the producers are very high. By lowering interest rates by the action taken by the Minister of Finance and this government, we are benefiting producers in their day-to-day operations and their interest costs. It is a benefit for farmers as it is a benefit to all Canadians to have a sound, stable, economic plan in place.