

Western Canada Drought

Secretary. I knew it was his qualities of leadership that counted. That is why I was very upset when I read this article by Nancy Russell in the *Star-Phoenix*. It said the following:

● (1740)

(PC-MP Assiniboia) was appointed by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney to head the drought task force, with a mandate of determining how best to assist farmers.

While it has been obvious from his lack of answers in the last few days that Gustafson has little clout in Ottawa, it was clear the federal Government planned to do something for farmers.

Then it goes on to say the following:

Agriculture Minister—put on quite a show Wednesday. The media went wild reporting on this \$30 per head, \$48 million lifesaver, of which Saskatchewan will receive \$16 million. Wise took credit for saving farmers from extinction while his provincial counterpart welcomed the news.

Wise and Ottawa haven't done a thing to improve upon what farmers have already been guaranteed by the province, while Hepworth and Saskatchewan have done half of what they said they would do. The \$30 per head from Ottawa is going into the province's pocket, while the \$60 per head from Saskatchewan is now only \$30.

I think it is because of that, sort of a double shuffle, that the Hon. Member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell wanted to give the Hon. Member for Assiniboia a chance to vindicate himself and to lay this on the table as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister of Canada.

A lot of people say very disparaging things about the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Nielsen). They call him things like Velcro Lips. Can you imagine the Hon. Member for Assiniboia being called Velcro Lips or Velcro Products? They do not want to use terms like that against him.

I would really hope that the Hon. Member would table this document, because that is what is before the House today. The Hon. Member for Yorkton—Melville (Mr. Nystrom) has outlined how the Member, when he was in the opposition, was a stalwart advocate of freedom of information, lay it all on the table. When the Prime Minister, as the Leader of the Opposition, spoke in Kingston, he said that he would have an open Government. Documents of this nature would be laid on the table automatically. The Member for Assiniboia cheered because he was supporting him in the leadership, and that was the kind of leader he wanted to go forward with. He knew that if he supported him and nominated him at the leadership convention, he would be chosen Parliamentary Secretary, and sure enough, he was. There was some discussion as to why he was chosen.

Every reputable farm organization, certainly the Saskatchewan pool and all of the big organizations, were recommending something like \$45 or \$50 an acre. We all knew on this side that the Hon. Member for Assiniboia would never make a recommendation as low as \$5 or \$10 per acre.

The Government was not going to be paying out all of its money that it is required to pay under the Western Transportation Act, the \$658 million, so we thought that since they

were not paying out all of that money under the Transportation Act they would probably come clean and make a larger amount available.

The Government was not going to make applications available until January, and they were only going to pay out \$95 million in the first three or four months of 1986, and they were not going to pay the rest of it until the next fiscal year. We knew he would never recommend anything as low as \$5 or \$11 an acre.

At the time of this drought, the worst in western Canada certainly in a generation, the farmers of western Canada were facing the wrath of that boiling hot sun day after day in their fields and their crops were withering up. Families in Saskatchewan were applying for social assistance from their welfare agencies.

The Government was imposing a 2-cents-a-litre harvest tax for every litre of gasoline or diesel fuel that they bought. The Hon. Member knew that the Government was welching on a promise with regard to fuel tax, and so obviously he would have recommended more than that.

I certainly hope the Hon. Member, later on today, will come clean and announce that. I know he is very embarrassed. I am not sure that he attended the economic summit in Washington on March 18 and 19. Normally, I believe, he travels with the Prime Minister on events like that. I know he had nothing to do with the printing of this document, the background papers, because in that document there is nary a mention of the United States farm Bill, a farm Bill that will reduce the net farm income of western farmers by at least 30 per cent right across the board. All farmers in the country will see their farm incomes drop by an average of 20 per cent, and nary a word is there in this document mentioning the United States Farm Bill, which is going to have a great impact.

This document outlines all of the problems which Canada and the United States have, such as softwood lumber, fish countervail, steel, Section 21, asbestos, shingles and shakes, electric razors, castings, forklift arms, and all of those things—there is nary a word.

The Prime Minister went to Washington to deal with the difficult problems facing Canada and the United States, and nary a word is there about the United States farm Bill, which is having a devastating impact.

Before he went to Japan the Prime Minister discovered that there was a farm problem. He made a great flourish here in Ottawa, flew over the Prairies, waved as he went by, but did not leave much money, and landed in Vancouver to open Expo before going on to the summit.

Finally he made the announcement that stopped the larceny which he started last September of 2.5 cents a litre on gasoline. He picked up another half a cent in January in sales tax. He stopped that larceny, and we are thankful for that. We wish he would make that retroactive so that while the farmers are suffering the worst drought in history—the Hon. Member for