

Senator Steuart: Except in Saskatchewan.

● (1550)

Senator Barootes: Thank you. The bright red ink has taken on a less brilliant hue. Though many may wish this trend could be accelerated, and perhaps it shall, it must be done gradually, moderately and carefully so as not to dislocate the economic environment—which was established in the prior 20 years—upon which our people and businesses have become dependent.

6. You will stand and cheer for this one: the Minister of Finance has proven himself an outstanding example of fiscal responsibility—

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Barootes:—exhibiting prudence, fairness, social sensitivity, acumen in business concerns, and has restored confidence in Canada in the international financial markets, as well as acting sympathetically to the concerns of the provinces.

Senator Steuart: I'll buy most of that.

Senator Barootes: 7. The National Energy Program, the NEP, has been dismantled, removing a huge burden from the oil and gas industry, lowering costs to consumers and giving a push to our productivity and enhancing our competitiveness in world markets.

Recent removal of the iniquitous revenue tax, the PGRT, 30 months earlier than anticipated, when coupled with the anticipated provincial royalty revisions which are anticipated, will be a welcome and timely relief to the western oil industry, especially in Alberta. It may be sufficient to avoid many bankruptcies and restore some employment in the exploration field, and this will occur as we await the fate of world oil prices in a market over which we have no control.

It is significant to note that producers in western Canada, although suffering terribly, support and praise the dismantling of the NEP and the deregulation of the industry. They prefer the freedom of the marketplace, however difficult, to the autocratic regulations of government controls.

8. In agriculture, massive assistance has been provided, usually dovetailed to matching assistance at provincial government levels. For three years agriculture has been troubled, especially the grain and livestock sectors in western Canada, not to overlook or exclude the problems of potato, sugar-beet, fruit, dairy and tobacco farmers elsewhere in Canada.

Until this year drought, plagues of insects and grasshoppers, diminishing markets, depressed and falling grain prices have combined with rapidly rising input costs that have virtually devastated agriculture on the prairies. Realizing that almost 50 per cent of my province's economy stems from agriculture and food production, you get some idea of the impact on the provincial economy.

And how has our federal government reacted to this agricultural and farm crisis? I hope that Senator Argue takes note of this: I would say magnificently and providentially. Since October 1, 1984—

Senator Steuart: Are you living in the same world?

[Senator Barootes.]

Senator Barootes: Since October 1, 1984, the federal government has legislated—

Senator Steuart: Would you answer a question?

Senator Barootes: I shall try to answer Senator Steuart's questions later.

Since October 1, 1984, the federal government has legislated, enacted and undertaken no less than 282 measures and announcements to assist farmers and farm groups across Canada. This commitment amounts to no less than \$5.2 billion in aid to agriculture in Canada, not including benefits from lower interest rates. If Senator Argue would like, I will read the 282 measures, but I would like to spare other honourable senators that.

Other provinces, as well as Saskatchewan, have reacted similarly in concert with the federal government, reinforcing the assistance to ensure that every bit of help is offered to farmers whose equity by any stretch of the imagination is deemed to be worthy of survival. Farm groups, financial institutions and governments at all levels have provided splendid co-operation and support.

Without fear of contradiction, I can say that no government in the history of Canada, or in the history of Saskatchewan, has done as much for the farming sector as have these present governments in the last two years. They have literally gone to the wall for farmers, and, if I may say so, I hope those worthy people will never forget it, particularly in this year of an election in Saskatchewan.

The Saskatchewan provincial government has endured a considerable deficit, as my honourable friend knows, to ensure that farmers can stay on their land to continue farming. Our premier is prepared to go another mile, if necessary, to ensure such survival, even if it means further deficits. It is that vital to our province and to Canada as well because 60 per cent of the grain raised for export in this country comes from that one province.

Is it not ironic, honourable senators, in view of this statistic of 60 per cent of export grain being produced in Saskatchewan, that the Canadian Wheat Board, the Board of Grain Commissioners, the Rail Transportation Group, the allocation of grain cars and most if not all of the agencies involved in grain transportation and marketing are located in Winnipeg, Manitoba, a province which produces only 10 to 15 per cent of that product? Perhaps by similar logic, and somewhat cynically, I could suggest that it would make sense to locate the Saltwater Fish Marketing Board in Saskatoon.

Canada faces a difficult situation caught in the crossfire between the European Economic Community and the United States subsidization of grain exports at fire sale prices. I, like all other western listeners, and I am sure Senator Steuart, was excited and delighted that the first domestic issue addressed in yesterday's Speech from the Throne was the definite commitment "to protect the interests of Canada's farming community in the face of unfair pricing and subsidy practices conducted outside of our borders."

Senator Steuart: Great words, but I want to see some action.