

*Government Orders*

two years: January 1, 1990 and it will disappear totally January 1, 1991. It will have the effect of taking between—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** Could the member put his question?

**Mr. Althouse:** What does the member think of a government that talks a good line but is pulling money out of our pockets at the same time as it is talking?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** I will give the hon. member one minute.

**Mr. Taylor:** Mr. Speaker, I am sorry I do not have more time to answer that question and to reiterate some of the figures that my hon. colleague has cited.

There is no question that my hon. colleague, who has been the New Democratic Party's agriculture critic for a number of years, has served the agriculture industry very well. His research has been second to none, and the government would be well served if it would listen to the criticisms and support brought forward by the hon. member for Mackenzie whom I consider a friend as well as a colleague.

The information that he provided to us today is very accurate. There is no question that the government is acting like that magician out there who is showing one thing in one hand and doing something else with the other one. I agree with him entirely and I wish him well in continuing to serve the farm community on agricultural matters.

**Hon. Ralph Ferguson (Lambton—Middlesex):** Mr. Speaker, I want to start today with commenting on the work of the House at the report stage on Bill C-48, the crop insurance bill.

I am glad to see, in spite of the two ministers' objections, that the House had the wisdom to adopt the amendment that ensures the federal government's commitment to the crop insurance program is at least 25 per cent and not up to 25 per cent. We would rather have had 50 per cent or one-third, at least. To cut it back to 25 per cent and then not include a proposal to make sure at least that it stays at that level and not be withdrawn or cut back later is wrong. That amendment is certainly a good one, and the House should be commended on its wisdom to include it as part of the legislation we are debating at third reading.

The Minister of Agriculture attempted to assure the House that the cut-back to their share of the premium

would never happen. Now, because of the amendment, we are sure it cannot happen unless the act is changed again by the House.

I would like to point out that this legislation is indeed a cutback in federal government funding for the crop insurance program. I would like to reflect on all the cutbacks in various farm programs this last year, and all of these coming at a time of extreme economic hardship in the farm sector. Spring planting is just a few weeks away and my neighbours will be starting to plant in a couple of weeks. The lending institutions are no longer lending on equity but rather lending only on a cash flow projections basis. No matter how one budgets for this coming year, with our low prices of wheat, corn, soybeans and other crops, one cannot cash flow in order to show a profit next fall. Consequently many farmers are having their operating loans cut off this year.

I think back to some of the discussions earlier this afternoon and to what happened on November 21. That was the day of the massive demonstration, that wonderful demonstration that was put together by the UPA of Quebec, the producers, organization in Quebec. They protested on Parliament Hill because of these massive cutbacks in spending in agriculture, because of the uncertainty resulting from the free trade agreement, and because the government failed to stand up at GATT and take the part of the producers.

I look back at what happened at that time and look at the events of today when two innocent people who were protesting on Parliament Hill were dragged off by the police, dragged out at a time when they were speaking to members of Parliament. One of them was a priest who was fasting on behalf of the unborn.

• (1820)

We heard arguments and references made to that meeting of November 21. When I think back on that I have to wonder if it is sheer coincidence that this action took place here today because the farmers were demonstrating on November 21 on the Hill. I have to think that perhaps the government is afraid to let them back on the Hill again to protest. It is afraid that the next time they come back if the government does not listen, they will tear the place apart. No doubt they will be joined by literally thousands upon thousands of farmers from across the rest of Canada.

**An Hon. Member:** Simcoe too.