

The minister's reply also pointed out that prices on the open market, so to speak, had gone up in 1973. That is the excuse he and his colleague in charge of the Wheat Board are relying on for not coming forward with positive agricultural policies. They are maintaining an agricultural support price policy of 80 per cent of the average of prices over the previous ten years. Mr. Speaker, that is not a support price policy; it is a disaster. It is useless.

Mr. Whelan: I never said anything about it.

Mr. Gleave: I know the minister did not say anything about it. If I were sitting over there with a support price policy like that, I would not say anything about it either. In his speech in Toronto he said that the opposition had prevented the government from passing its grain stabilization bill. You bet we did, Mr. Speaker. That was a companion piece to the agricultural prices support policy. It would have left the farmers locked into disaster prices. If the minister does not believe that those were disaster prices, let him take the time to read statements made by Gordon MacEachen, president of the Agricultural Economics Research Council.

Mr. Whelan: He is just reading my old speeches.

Mr. Gleave: Then maybe the minister should read some of his own old speeches.

Mr. Whelan: When I want to feel good, I do.

Mr. Gleave: The wheat producer will still be subsidizing the domestic market. If the minister in charge of the Wheat Board could have got away with it, the producer would be subsidizing the domestic market by 75 cents a bushel more than is stated in the minister's latest announcement. I emphasize the minister's "latest announcement" because he has yet to come into this House with legislation or an order in council. This is no way to deal with an industry as important as agriculture which in my province accounts for 75 per cent of its real earning power. I do not think it is good enough for the Minister of Agriculture to make such statements in Toronto as, "The opposition for years has fought every move we tried to make in parliament to establish Canadian agriculture on a sound and solid footing."

The only thing that pulled agriculture out of the doldrums was a world shortage of food. There was a world food shortage, but neither the minister nor his colleagues brought legislation before the House that the opposition could support. It is time we had something better than this type of statement by the Minister of Agriculture.

● (1730)

The statement goes on to say that the opposition parties in the House are playing games, they are playing politics with farmers and with the agricultural industry. If the Minister of Agriculture thought that, why did he not say so in the House? In any event, why did he not come in with an appropriate piece of legislation and put his case before the House? If he thought that the opposition, and my party in particular, had nothing to contribute to the welfare of agriculture, why did he not say that in the House? He has not done that.

Crop Insurance Act

At present, the feed grains program is such that prices are satisfying neither the western grower nor the eastern consumer. That policy still hangs in the air, so to speak. There was to be a statement by August 1, then there was to be a statement by September 1, and after that there was to be one by the middle of September. We did have a reasonable feed grains pricing policy at one time, although I do not know what in the world will be left of it by the time the two ministers responsible are through with it.

If the minister thought that the present policy was such a good idea, why did he not try it on soybeans which have increased in price a good deal more than barley and wheat? Dairy farmers and hog producers in my constituency buy soybean meal, even at present prices, to be used as protein. In Saskatchewan, nobody pays the freight bill from Toronto or Altona in order to make meal available to farmers in Saskatchewan. You just pay that kind of freight, and the government is not saying that it will do something about the price of soybeans and subsidize the guy who is feeding livestock in western Canada. Instead of indulging in rhetoric—

An hon. Member: Mushroom rhetoric.

Mr. Gleave: —yes, mushroom rhetoric, the Minister of Agriculture should get down to cases and bring out a program for Canadian agriculture that will put it on a good footing so that farmers may farm with confidence. If the government does that, there will be adequate food supplies for Canadians who, instead of being forced to pay feast or famine prices in the chain stores will, as a result of sound pricing policy, be able to buy food on the shelves at reasonable prices. I suggest in all seriousness that the government bend its efforts along those lines and look at the complete agricultural picture and not just at the little corners where it thinks something must be done.

As far as the crop insurance bill is concerned, I think the minister said that we support it. One can look at the record and see that when the crop insurance changes came before this House, they received the support of my party.

Mr. Whelan: And I said this last night, too.

Mr. Gleave: Yes. Then what in the world is the purpose of making statements like the one to which I have referred?

Mr. Whelan: On the front of the release does it not say "Notes for an address"?

Mr. Gleave: I don't care if these are notes for a speech. It is the whole damn approach I object to.

Mr. Whelan: I could send the hon. member the tapes, if he wants them, and he could listen to them.

Mr. Gleave: Mr. Speaker, I have quoted extracts from these notes which, according to the front of the release, come "from the office of the Hon. Eugene F. Whelan," and so on. As far as I am concerned, the Minister of Agriculture bears some responsibility. If he wants to get up in this House or anywhere else and say that such and such a thing is the case, that is his right. But I suggest that it is not his right to go around—

Mr. Whelan: Well, I suggest that it is.