Agricultural Subsidies

study to determine what effect this legislation will have on the competitive position of our farmers. I find this very hard to believe.

The Government must either be lying or be damned fools. Would a Government bring in massive changes to western agriculture without first considering the competitive position in which it would leave our farmers? Do our negotiators to GATT and other international conferences go without any idea what subsidies agriculture in other countries receives? I cannot believe we are that stupid or that naive. Either the Government are lying or they are damned fools.

Perhaps in answer the Government is deliberately misleading the House. Of course, it has studies comparing agricultural subsidies but it does not want to make them public. It does not want to acknowledge the fact that Canadian agriculture, particlarly grain farming, is the least subsidized in the world. It does not want to acknowledge that fact because it would show the economic folly of what the Government is doing with a Bill to change the Crowsnest Pass Agreement.

The Government owes this House and the Canadian public some straight answers. I hope that the Government spokesperson who will be speaking today on this motion will give us some answers. I hope he will answer whether anybody in International Trade and Commerce, External Affairs, Agriculture or Transport monitors subsidies in agriculture in Canada and in other countries. Surely such people exist and surely such studies are done. I hope that the Government spokesperson who speaks today will tell the House, yes or no, that we do have these people or we do not have these people.

It is amazing that the Government while in the midst of such massive changes to agriculture in western Canada should come to this House and admit that it has done no studies on the subsidies that the chief competitors receive. Is this possible? I am so flabbergasted that I have difficulty trying to find the words to define how I feel. That is most unusual for a politican.

With massive resources at its disposal, economists and specialists filling tower after tower of highrises in this city, the Government admits that it does not have any studies on the subsidies that agriculture in the United States receives or on the subsidies that farmers in the European Economic Community, Argentina and Australia receive. Does the Government mean to tell me that it actually does not know? If the Government does not know, how dare it proceed with Bill C-155?

If you plan major moves in agriculture, Mr. Speaker, you have to consider the subsidies that are received by farmers throughout the world. Not to do so is ultimate stupidity. Why has the Government not done those studies? Is it afraid to do those studies? Is it afraid to table them for the public to see? I think the latter is the case. I would not tend to think that the Government, with its massive bureaucracy, is that stupid but that the figures, studies and reports are there. The Hon. Member opposite shakes his head no. Is he admitting that the Government is so stupid it does not do any studies on agricultural subsidies in other countries? Is that what the Govern-

ment member is admitting? In either case, Mr. Speaker, the Government stands condemned as either being a liar or being damned naive and stupid.

● (1740)

I urge the House to pass the motion and force the Government to make these relevant documents public so that Members of the House and the Canadian public can take a good, honest look at the type of competition our grain farmers will be facing in the years ahead.

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Dionne (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the world food situation is a matter of concern for many prominent figures in political and economic circles, as it is for people in many countries, for purely humanitarian reasons. That being said, Mr. Speaker, I think the Hon. Member for Regina East (Mr. de Jong) ought to know that there is not a single country, and I am mainly thinking of the industrialized countries with widely differing policies, that is going to divulge exactly the kind of subsidies it grants, either directly or indirectly, to agriculture. I think it is hard to see, what with unilateral, bilateral, multilateral agreements, what kind of direct or indirect subsidies are being granted, considering that production differs from country to country.

The present rate of population growth is such that we can expect an increase in the world demand for food that exceeds the projected growth in food production. For many years, people have been talking about a world food crisis. At a time when demand is expected to continue to increase, when certain developing countries are showing signs of positive economic growth, and we are seeing a growing trend towards consumer societies of the kind that exist in most western countries, it was to be expected that countries that are major exporters of food commodities would compete and will continue to compete most actively for a large share of these lucrative markets.

Mr. Speaker, once again, I am convinced that the countries engaged in this very competitive exercise will not divulge their secrets and tell us how they are subsidizing certain commodities, either directly or indirectly. They are attracted by very substantial economic benefits, for their balance of payments and domestic income, and this is particularly true of western countries that are not yet out of the economic recession. Will this lead to a trade war in the agro-food sector, in the form of fierce competition on export markets and increased protectionist measures on the respective domestic markets of the countries and groups of countries concerned?

I would not go so far as to say that such a war has already started, but the issues being raised today and the concerns that have been expressed with respect to developments in trade relations over the last few years already give some indication of what the foreign trade situation may be in the not so distant future. I have just mentioned that current forecasts indicate