

Agricultural Policies

which suggest that there is anything but the very best intentions on the part of this government.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aiken: Mr. Speaker, will the minister accept a question? It relates to his statement about getting Bill C-197 into committee. Will the minister advise the House what amendments in principle, if any, the government will permit in the Standing Committee if the bill reaches that committee? I have never seen any amendments in principle allowed by the government.

Mr. Lang: I do not have the advantage of having served in this House very long. I certainly do not have the obvious advantage of the hon. member opposite. I thought the majority on a committee could approve any amendment.

Mr. Aiken: The majority in the committee are Liberal members.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Southam).

Mr. Aiken: You are admitting that there will be no amendments.

An hon. Member: No.

Mr. Aiken: Of course you are.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. R. R. Southam (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure and duty to take part in this debate this afternoon as the representative of a western riding in which I am deeply involved in the economic welfare of agriculture. I wish to commend the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggan (Mr. Gleave) who moved the motion and brought this serious problem of the agricultural industry to the attention of this House. I wish to read the motion to refresh the memory of hon. members:

That this House calls upon the government to reverse its present policies which have deliberately depressed the agricultural economy of this country, causing excessive unemployment, lack of income, slow economic growth and little hope for the future, and this House urges the government to take positive measures to ensure a dynamic rural community as an essential component of Canadian society.

This motion is very basic in content. I compliment the hon. member for Kent-Essex (Mr. Danforth) for the very capable way in which he placed before the House the support of our

party with respect to this motion. I also congratulate the hon. member for Annapolis Valley (Mr. Nowlan) and the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) for following up that support. Every member who represents a rural riding, regardless of his political affiliation, should support the motion presently being debated. It appears that the present government's agricultural policies, such as they are, are designed to provide cheap food at the expense of the producer.

On Monday last the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) announced the unpegging of the Canadian dollar. What will this do to our agricultural industry? If the Canadian dollar floats up to par, it will cost Canadian farmers untold millions of dollars per year. For example, if we sell 350 million bushels of wheat in the next crop year, it will cost the farmers \$21 million if our dollar reaches par and remains there. The moment the dollar increased 4 cents, the price of wheat was immediately lowered by 6 cents a bushel in order to compete in world markets. If the dollar should rise even higher, wheat prices will drop still further. These facts apply to all other export grains such as oats, barley, rye and oilseeds plus the many millions of dollars worth of livestock or livestock products that Canadian farmers export from year to year.

I listened with interest this afternoon when the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) listed the long catalogue of legislative items dealing with agriculture. Most of what he referred to goes back 10 or 12 years to the good Progressive Conservative agricultural legislation. No matter how good this legislation may be, we need more legislative programs to meet today's needs. On Tuesday of this week, as recorded at page 7602 of *Hansard*, I directed the following question to the minister:

I have a question for the Minister of Agriculture. In view of the serious plight of agriculture, a situation aggravated by the unpegging of the Canadian dollar on Sunday, may I ask when we can expect the long-awaited announcement on the government's over-all agricultural policies?

The minister replied as follows:

There have been many policy announcements made from time to time and the aggregate of these announcements is the over-all policy, which may be amended again from time to time.

This is not good enough. It is what we have heard from this minister ever since he took office, as well as from previous ministers. There does not seem to be any co-ordinated policy. As far as agriculture is concerned, we have a piecemeal situation. From time to time there are announcements based on whatever