

capability. This research and development must be directed towards ensuring a continuing supply of food that Canadians can afford, while providing a fair return for the primary producer and processor. In addition, the food production system should provide a surplus for export which is so important to Canada's balance of payments in world trade.

To meet this challenge, we must have a commitment from federal and provincial governments and from industry, a commitment to reverse the current trend of declining research and development programs in agriculture. The commitment should recognize the need to provide not only the financial resources for expanded programs in research and development but also the trained scientists to ensure that Canada maintains and enhances her place as one of the world's agricultural leaders.

● (2140)

I endorse that statement. What the government should be doing is to increase not decrease its funding of research and development.

The hon. member for Hastings (Mr. Ellis) has spoken of funding in the industrial area. Coming from an agricultural area I am interested in funding for agricultural purposes. If you go to some of the experimental farms around the prairies you will find that they are almost begging for money. They do not have funds to carry out their programs adequately. I think this is a disgrace because it is important that we continue to develop new strains of grains to increase production, new strains of livestock, and so on. If we do not, we will lag behind the United States, the U.S.S.R., and other countries in their advances in agriculture.

I should like to turn now to the provision in the bill dealing with western grain stabilization, which is clause 14 of the bill, which in effect enables the government not to place funds in the Consolidated Revenue Fund for the purposes of western grain stabilization. I am not an accountant but it seems to me that the effect of this amendment would be as if an employer said to his employees, "We have a pension plan and you people put your money in it, but we are going to delay putting our share of the money into the plan". There is no doubt that by not setting this money aside the budgetary requirements will be reduced each year until the money is called for, and there is no question that under the Western Grain Stabilization Act there is a requirement that the government put in \$2 for every \$1 that the farmer puts in, plus the interest.

The hon. member for Battleford-Kindersley (Mr. McIsaac) was correct when he said that there was certainly no question about the government's obligation to pay in the money. I say that the obligation is there and that it will continue year after year as long as the plan is in existence, so it seems to me rather ridiculous for the government to decide that it will not put in the money but will use it for some other purposes. To me this means that possibly next year or the following year the government will have to set aside in its budget double or triple the amount which it would set aside this year.

When the hon. member for Battleford-Kindersley spoke in the House on November 10 he said the following in respect of the Western Grain Stabilization Act:

I regret that more than 30,000 western producers have decided to opt out of the plan. I do not put that down to the fact that farmers are not prepared to accept the trust or confidence of this government; however, they have been

### *Restraint of Government Expenditures*

listening to some of the chatter and nonsense in discussions that led up to this bill, although I certainly cannot say that of the hon. member for Medicine Hat.

Since that speech was made, it is my understanding that the farmers who have opted out now number close to 40,000. The hon. member for Battleford-Kindersley is correct when he says that they are not prepared to accept the trust or confidence of this government. The situation is that farmers do not understand this program. I know that the hon. member for Assiniboia has travelled in his constituency and in the province making presentations to the producers. In the summertime I myself rented a hall and brought down officials of the Department of Agriculture to explain the program to a group of 30 or 40 farmers. They understood the program. But recently I had a telephone call from a group of farmers who told me that in their understanding they only had until November 30 of this year to make a decision so far as this program is concerned, and they asked me what they should do and whether I would meet with them. I asked them whether they have had any meetings, and they told me that they had spoken to their elevator agent who does not understand the program and to their agricultural representative who cannot explain the program to them, so what are they going to do?

**Mr. Goodale:** Why don't you ask me to come to explain it? I have accepted more than 50 invitations from farmers across the prairies to do that.

**An hon. Member:** It costs too much money.

**Mr. Neil:** It certainly did not cost too much for me to explain it last Sunday. I spent two and a half hours with seven farmers explaining the program to them. As a result of that meeting five of the seven farmers indicated they were prepared to accept the program.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**An hon. Member:** You are alone over there.

**Mr. Neil:** No, I am not alone over here. The hon. member for Assiniboia suggests I am alone. That is not so. Members of this party have not knocked the Western Grain Stabilization Act.

**Mr. Mazankowski:** We have improved it.

**Mr. Neil:** We attempted to improve it by amendments, by representations and by recommendations, but the Minister in charge of the Wheat Board (Mr. Lang) was not prepared to accept our recommendations. Farmers in the west would have loved to accept them.

**Mr. Goodale:** You try to be fair, but the rest in your party try to knock it down.

**Mr. Neil:** Members on this side of the House have not knocked the program. Anyone I have spoken to has recommended to the farmers that they participate in the program. What I am saying is that this government has not explained the program to the farmers.