

Agricultural Policies

Mr. Nowlan: Seventeen hours.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I wonder if we can have order. Is the hon. member rising on a point of order?

Mr. Caouette: No, Mr. Speaker, I just want to know if the minister would accept a question.

Mr. Olson: If I have time at the end of my speech I will accept it.

Mr. Nowlan: We will give you time.

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that hon. members opposite have become exercised at the mention of this question because apparently it has finally gotten through to them that the farmers of this country wanted this legislation a long time ago.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Horner: They did not.

Mr. Danforth: In parliamentary terms, that is a gross misrepresentation.

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, I can tell by the way they respond that they have finally received the message. As I say, I could go on and on describing all the other policies that are in effect, including ones that the government inherited as well as the new announcements that have been made with respect to policy innovations and amendments to policy. But the motion asks the federal government "to reverse its policies" without saying which ones it should reverse. So, I have to take the hon. member at his word, and if farmers across the country know he is asking for all these policies to be reversed, then he will have explanations to make that will take him far longer than he has time in which to make them.

I feel hon. members do agriculture a disservice when they belittle the agricultural sector, and speak in the kind of tones and use the kind of words that we heard earlier today. I would like to remind hon. members opposite that agriculture is still one of the most important portions of our total economy. In fact, one-fifth of the total gross value of factory shipments from Canadian manufacturing industry is comprised of processed goods, the raw material for which comes from agriculture. The food processing industry alone employs over a quarter of a million workers.

One-third of the freight hauled through the St. Lawrence Seaway is of agricultural origin, and about 18 per cent of all the goods moved by our railways comes off the farms. So, Mr. Speaker, I hope that hon. members opposite will not speak of agriculture any more in the disparaging tones that we heard today.

Mr. Nowlan: This speech is going to be an agricultural product. It will help a compost heap.

Mr. Olson: I am the first to admit that there have been some difficulties in certain sectors of the agricultural community within the last two or three years so far as markets are concerned. It is fair for us to examine these. The most important sector has been in the grains economy, and even there in wheat almost exclusively. In fact, if wheat and wheat alone, not even all cereals, is removed from the calculations of cash receipts to Canadian agriculture, these show an over-all increase in almost every other sector of the commodity groups. Let us look at some of the important statistics. For example, in 1968 dairy products brought the farmers \$644 million. That was increased to \$677 million in 1969. I do not say, Mr. Speaker, that \$677 million is satisfactory. I do not even say it has kept up with some of the other changes in the commercial and industrial sector of the economy, but the disparaging remarks to the effect that everything has gone down just are not true. For example, hog receipts showed a marked increase in 1968 from \$410 million to \$461 million. But hon. members do not like to hear these figures. They want to paint the whole agricultural scene and everything in it black. But I think this is wrong—

• (2:20 p.m.)

Mr. Horner: Get a new speech writer, Bud.

Mr. Olson: Poultry receipts, excluding eggs increased from \$228 million in 1968 to \$250 million in 1969, and egg receipts from \$164 million in 1968 to \$188 million in 1969.

If I may digress for a moment, Mr. Speaker, there are some problems developing in the egg producing sector. It would appear that supplies are going to overrule the effective market demand fairly soon. If hon. members opposite want to do the agricultural industry a service they will get on with passing the marketing bill so that we can go ahead with the co-ordination of agencies involved in the marketing of eggs.

Mr. Horner: Bring the bill in, then.