

Farm Income

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, I will not take up much more time because this is an opposition day, and I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this debate.

When we talk about trade, I think we should have some symposia on this subject. We are developing marketing programs and working harder in that area than any other nation in the world. I am often criticized for travelling, but when I travel abroad it is generally because a group of associations have come to the Government of Canada and said: "We think the minister could have some impact on such countries as Brazil to sell our livestock, or on the Balkans to sell our poultry, breeding stock or livestock, or some of the farm machinery we make here." As the hon. member for Brant said, and I agree with him, we should have something like the auto pact with respect to farm machinery, although his leader criticized it the other day. I think we could make some improvements to it because we can see some failings in the auto pact. But if we had not had the auto pact, we would be in the same position with regard to auto parts as we are with farm machinery, which comes in duty free. That is something that many people do not know. Even many farmers think that farm machinery has a tariff on it. We can bring machinery parts in duty free while an American farmer cannot do so. I think the duty is 7 per cent on parts bought here and taken back to the United States.

Another way to discourage our know-how and spirit of entrepreneurship is to try to create a parts system for machinery in Canada. This is just impossible and is not warranted because one has to pay duty to supply the North American market.

The motion reads in part:

—encourage the expansion and improvement of agricultural research to ensure efficient production techniques;

I have never heard so much talk about research and what is happening to it, yet I have not heard one hon. member, one of the scientists, point out to me one research area that is suffering. We have done some of the greatest research in agriculture. There are no in-house research projects for which I am responsible that are suffering or that are going to suffer, because I am the one who makes the decision for any contracting out. Universities will go to some members in the House and say to them: "We must have agricultural research". That is contracting out. Make sure you let your constituents know that you made representations to the Minister of Agriculture and he responds to your request by giving a grant to a university to do agricultural research.

Provincial ministers have also said they do not want any more contracting out. They are proud of our CDA research group, the greatest in the world. We signed an agreement yesterday to share expertise and research with the United States. Thus we will share the research, not duplicate it. We think that is the best way of going about it. Instead of their doing research and us doing the same kind of research, which would be a complete duplication, we could have a shared program.

● (1622)

I should like to refer to direct food aid. Recently I made our pledge to the United Nations; it was approximately two weeks ago. Once again Canada is in the forefront of food aid and food aid development of every description. We are not ashamed of anything. I am not ashamed when I suggest some kind of cartel to sell our food on the world market in order to receive a decent price for it from countries such as Japan, the European Economic Community and the OPEC countries. These countries are stockpiling our food at below the cost of production. Then people, including hon. members on both sides of the House, ask us to use stabilization programs to make sure our producers stay in business. They are still pointing out the great economic strides being made by countries like Japan. That indicates how powerful these countries are. The very system we operate under is based on stabilizing our commodities to stay in business. Then they are thrown on the world market. We pound one another on the head. What does all this economic nonsense add up to? Should we subsidize the treasuries of those countries? Should our funds be used in such a manner?

As I have indicated, we spend the least of any country in the world percentagewise. The budget of my department only amounts to 2 per cent of total federal expenditures. When all provincial and federal expenditures across Canada are added, one will find approximately 4 per cent goes to agriculture. We have a healthy, productive agricultural entity. The organization we have allows farmers to look after themselves. People say that the bureaucracy is running these agricultural entities which I am talking about, those people who have net incomes. They are not run by public service bureaucracy, they are run by the producers themselves. In some instances even consumers are on the board. They are running one of the most efficient ships in the world.

I think I would be remiss if I did not end up with a four letter word: eggs. What other product went down in price 3.4 per cent last year and still gives a very fair return to the producers? They receive a net profit for their investment, for the total cost of operation, for their managerial ability, etc. Some people have indicated that it is wrong for farmers to make a constant, steady income. They are efficient producers. I have added the word "efficient" because generally people do not. Never has there been a time in our history when an hour's wage would buy so many eggs as it does now. An hour's wage buys approximately eight dozen eggs.

When I was a young man, I remember working in a factory. I received 55 cents an hour for my work. At that time a dozen eggs cost 45 cents, a pound of beef cost 50 cents and a pound of butter cost 46 cents. It almost took an hour's wage to buy one pound of those products. Never before in our lives has an hour's wage bought so much. Our export policy, agricultural policy, food policy, or whatever one wants to call that humblemumble, is the best in the world.

Mr. Stan Schellenberger (Wetaskiwin): Mr. Speaker, as I rise to take part in the debate on the motion proposed by the