

million in 1950 to \$1,300 million in 1970. Perhaps it will be a little more meaningful to state that in 20 years the cost rose from \$8 per cultivated acre to \$18 per cultivated acre, more than double the cost per acre.

The facts which this House must be concerned with are the desperate financial situation of the farmer, the continuing rise in farm costs, the everlasting squeeze in which the farmer finds himself as a result of the international market, and the continuing rise in farm expenses. I emphasize the fact that I do not pretend to be an expert in this area. However, over many years I have tried to understand it and perhaps do understand it to some extent at least.

The orientation of this government toward agriculture, as indicated by the various documents to which I have referred, is the same as the technocratic orientation of this government to every other sector of our economy. It is an orientation toward business consideration, an orientation toward the dollar, an orientation toward the balance of payments, an orientation toward exports. At no point is it an orientation toward farm people or toward the welfare and future of the rural communities of this country.

● (12:20 p.m.)

Everyone who has studied the matter at all is fully aware that there are in Canada some marginal and uneconomic farms which, possibly, can never be made viable. Their position requires special consideration. But these are not the farms, and they are certainly not exclusively the farms, toward which the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Lang) in charge of the Wheat Board has directed his writings that I have read. He has directed it toward the entire agricultural economy. He has directed it toward the concept that very large farms integrated with choking agribusiness will be more efficient in terms of the dollar. That may well be so. But at what cost to Canada and to the rural communities in particular.

Without wanting to sound sentimental or maudlin, I say, as a city feller, that I believe, as I have always believed, that the rural life of Canada is an important and integral part of Canadian society. The rural communities are important to our welfare as a nation. What does the government want to do, I ask. It seems to me that what the government wants to do is rationalize western farming to the point of making them into factory farms run mostly by foreign-owned food corporations.

**Mr. Lang:** Nonsense!

**Mr. Lewis:** It is not nonsense. It is a fact. This is what the task force on agriculture means. It cannot mean anything else. If he wants to take two farmers out of every three off the land, that is the eventual effect of the policy upon which the hon. gentleman and the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) have now embarked; that will be the effect envisaged in the statements he has made and the writing he has produced and which I have read. They want to turn our rural communities into ghost towns. They want not only to throw farm folk off the

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land but to close up local stores and service industries, because that will be the result of the policies which are being pursued.

**Mr. Lang:** That is malicious nonsense.

**Mr. Lewis:** It is not malicious nonsense. It is the truth of what the minister is doing, and the arrogance of his denial is evidence of the fact that what I am saying is right.

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

**Mr. Lewis:** Every step the government has taken, every step the government has proposed, leads inevitably in that direction, whether or not they have had the courage to state it publicly. They have not, but it leads inevitably in that direction. What is at stake, therefore, is the welfare of farm families and the communities which serve their needs. What is at stake, briefly, is the rural lifestyle in our society, something which these technocrats opposite are determined to reduce to a factory assembly line. We believe this to be destructive of Canada's future.

One word, Mr. Speaker, about farm efficiency. Again I address myself to my own constituents, to the constituents of central Canada and those of industrial centres in the east and west.

When Canadians think of technological change or advance they think primarily of industries located in the urban centres and of the resource industries in the forests and underground. The fact is that technological development in the agricultural industry has been immense in the last number of years and the agricultural industry in Canada has for years shown the most dramatic productivity compared with other areas in our economy. For example, the rate of productivity increase for all commercial industries in this country has been estimated at about 3.5 per cent per year since the end of the war. The growth rate for productivity in agriculture during that time has been the highest in the country at about 5½ per cent per year. So no one has the right to talk disparagingly about farm efficiency because if there is one industry in this country which is increasing its productivity through technological change it is the agricultural industry. Farmers have learned modern farm management to an extent they have never done before. They have concentrated on maximum production and good farming such as impresses one every time one visits a farm community in this country.

So we have no right to question farm efficiency at this time. It is our duty to pay homage—not to every farmer, of course; there are exceptions in every sector of our society—to our farmers generally and particularly to the grain growers for the immense advance they have made in productivity, an advance which they have made possible frequently at the expense of mortgaging not only their own future but the future of their children and their grandchildren for years to come.

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