

*Agricultural Policies*

that agreement with our southern neighbour, investors here can gear up to meet that market. But the western farmer who is advised by the government to move into beef production may say, "Wait a minute; what kind of imports from other countries must I compete against? What kind of costs am I to anticipate? How secure is the market?" These are questions the farmer asks himself when he tools up. What is the monetary policy of the government if I invest, and how far can I look ahead?

The government should look toward stabilizing income. Certainly, I think that it is the intention of the government, through the provisions of Bill C-197, to look toward a stabilizing factor in marketing across Canada. This will have a positive effect, but as against that when I asked the minister questions about the cash advance program I discovered that farmers who have followed this program are now facing demands for repayment, and have no way of meeting those demands. This is an inconsistency in policy which should be removed. We need a consistent approach to the type of farming which we hope to have, and to the type of capital organization that we desire in Canada. I am going a bit far afield, Mr. Speaker, but the task force on agriculture decided to deal with this aspect. It must have been within their terms of reference and they must have thought it important. Unfortunately, as I read the report of the task force I judge that they favour an increase in corporate farming, larger and larger aggregates of feed lots concentrated in certain places, and feel this would be a workable solution to the farm problem. I doubt very much that it will be.

● (12.10 p.m.)

The task force said that we should contemplate many farmers going out of farming. It talked about the older people retiring, and it talked about retraining the younger people who are in farming so that they may seek other jobs. I doubt that this is a constructive policy. It grieves me that such a policy should be proposed, and that the government may readily accept it, at a time when we have a high rate of unemployment, which is now running at about 6.5 per cent or 6.6 per cent of the labour force. I suppose if you include those who are in manpower retraining programs the level would touch 7 per cent. To suggest that we take people out of farming at this time, or at least until this economic factor is corrected, is simply not a realistic or

practical way of approaching things. At a time when the problem of pollution is facing our cities and urban centres, it is impractical to suggest that we concentrate feeding and livestock activity near such centres. It takes ten times as much effort to look after the disposal of waste from a beef critter as from a human being. With 30,000 or 40,000 head of livestock in feed lots close to our urban centres the pollution in our streams and waterways would certainly be increased.

I do not think that this country appreciates the contribution of the individual farmer to its wellbeing. My serious advice to members of this House and the people of this country is to take a good hard look at what the individual farmer has done. Considering his contribution, we should take measures to see that the 400,000 or 500,000 who are left can survive and operate. I am not making a plea for subsistence farming, Mr. Speaker, I am making a plea for the ordinary farmer with workable amounts of capital who is ready to put his money and time on the line, who is ready to buck the tiger and feed the Canadian people. And they have been jolly well fed, Mr. Speaker.

The government seems to believe that the farmer can stand all kinds of competition without protection, that he can stand the winds of ill fortune and whatever is thrown at him and still come up smiling and survive. But he won't. I do not know how many of them will fail to survive the Lift program but I am sure it will be a considerable number. The government and the minister may consider the program a success but I am here to say to this House, Mr. Speaker, that the more it succeeds, the more it will fail and the greater will be the disaster.

I think the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) stated one day that the government had received the initial report of the task force some time in February. If this is so, I fail to understand why they consider doing in one year what the task force recommended they should do in three. It is unfair to force the whole impact of such a program upon the farmer in one short crop year when it would have been difficult enough for him to cope with it over a three-year period, which is what the task force suggested. In these programs the government should take into consideration not only its own objectives but the situation of the farmer. After all, farmers are people. As Shakespeare said, "If you cut me, do I not bleed?" This is where the short term