

Family Farm

later followed by the grass incentives program. These programs resulted in a massive reduction in wheat production. To be more exact, in 1969 total wheat production was 652 million bushels; with the implementation of the LIFT program, 1970 production was down to 312.5 million bushels, a reduction of some 340 million bushels.

With the implementation of the grass incentives program which followed, production was further curtailed and has not recovered to 1969 levels even to this date. In 1971 we were 142 million bushels short of the 1969 figure; in 1972 we were 139 million bushels short, and in 1973 we were 43 million bushels short. This totals, Mr. Speaker, to a reduced production of wheat, which occurred as a direct result of deliberate government policy, of 664 million bushels between 1970 and 1973 inclusive.

● (1620)

The price of bread wheat today is approximately \$5.70 a bushel; the price of Durum is approximately \$8.95 a bushel. A rough calculation indicates that about 17 per cent of our production is Durum, while about 83 per cent of our production is of the bread wheat or the slightly less expensive variety; or, we can round it up by saying one-fifth is Durum and four-fifths is the other bread variety of wheat. If we calculate the loss of income to the prairie farmer in terms of dollars since the present minister became responsible for the Wheat Board, we can easily see that he has done irreparable damage and harm to the wheat producer.

A quick calculation, at today's prices, of the loss due to decreased production of Durum wheat of 133 million bushels at \$8.95 a bushel amounts to approximately \$1.2 billion; decreased production of other bread wheat of 531 million bushels, at approximately \$5.70 a bushel, amounts to approximately \$3 billion. In short, by one stroke of his pen the minister responsible for the Wheat Board, the hon. member for Saskatoon-Humboldt, has reduced income to the western wheat farmer by \$4.2 billion since he has become minister responsible for the Wheat Board. If for no other reason, that reason by itself is sufficient cause not only for having him removed from the cabinet but for having him exiled from the country as well.

Mr. Danforth: That is a little strong.

Mr. Yewchuk: It may be strong, but consider how many years it will take western agriculture to recover that kind of loss. The injury caused is no less than if the same minister had dropped an atomic bomb on each of those three provinces. Western Canadian farmers cannot forgive him for this kind of tragic blunder in policy and planning. There is no doubt that this kind of policy has resulted in many more people leaving the farm in disgust to seek a better life elsewhere.

Other policies that this government has enacted since it has come to power have been mainly to increase interest rates on loans available to farmers, and introduction of the small farm development program. The small farm development program itself has been in operation in Alberta since September, 1972, and in Manitoba and Saskatchewan since June of 1973; in other words, since last summer. This small farm development program has only had the effect of increasing the process of depopulation of rural areas.

[Mr. Yewchuk.]

As a direct result of this program, 251 farmers in the three prairie provinces received assistance to expand their farms in order to make them more economically viable. Also as a direct result of this program, 1,247 farms were disposed of, and the same number of farm families were displaced from their homes only to be faced with a whole set of new problems such as relocation, possibly vocational retraining, procurement of new housing, etc. But, most important of all, they have had to give up a way of life which they had chosen to follow because that way of life was no longer possible under the present regime.

Obviously, new policies are required, policies that are deliberately designed to increase financial returns to farmers in order that they may return to the land or remain on the land. They must be policies to guarantee the farmer a fair price for his product. They must be policies to encourage new farmers to start farming operations if they are interested in that vocation. They must be policies to encourage vigorous marketing of Canadian agricultural products and to cut substantially the inflated overhead costs that the farmer must now bear as a result of the uncontrolled inflation that has gripped our country in recent months.

Policies must be short-term, mid-term and long-term. Short-term policies could be based on an incentive subsidization, but they can only be short-term. Long-term policies must be based on a vigorous marketing system and the production of an abundance and variety of high-quality Canadian agricultural products. By this method, stability of a fair return to the producer can be achieved as well as reasonable prices to the consumer.

From the consumer's point of view, the only way to ensure a stable food cost is to ensure adequate domestic agricultural production. At the same time it must be recognized that farmers are entitled, and indeed must be able, to receive reasonable profit from this increased agricultural production. If there is no profit in production, production will decrease, thereby increasing even more our dependency upon imports to supply our needs. That can only mean higher food costs to consumers.

To sum up, there is no doubt in my mind that the tremendous loss of income to farmers has been a direct result of government interference in the private affairs of farmers. Farm policies must be drawn up in close consultation with the producers, not by backroom bureaucrats. Policies must be designed to allow a farmer to do what he can do best, which is to produce. We had the spectacle in 1969 of the minister responsible of the Wheat Board touring his own province and other provinces and hearing the same complaints from the farmers about the amount of grain they could grow. What the farmers wanted him to do was to find markets; instead, his decision was to cut production. That is an example of direct government interference in the affairs of farmers which has resulted in severe damage to their incomes.

In my view, production can best be achieved in the agricultural sphere through following the principles of free enterprise, which incorporates the incentive of "the harder you work, the better is your financial return." I believe that the farmer should be given the opportunity to play a large role in the solution to his problems, through his own efforts and through the efforts of his farm organi-