

• (2:10 p.m.)

Conspicuously absent from the bill is any mention of the agricultural industry. Certainly, that industry is worthy of our consideration and it deserves recognition equal to that given to any other industry. I think it is time the government dedicated itself to making agriculture a national asset and a national priority. It will not do that by applying recommendations of the task force report which suggest that we can only cure the problems of agriculture by removing two thirds of the farmers out of the industry. When we couple the effects of the surtax to the effects of our poor record of marketing and to the effects of poor returns on our product, it becomes obvious that the plan of "occupational genocide" is fast becoming reality. To substantiate this observation, one merely has to look at the Dominion Bureau of Statistics Report on farm net income for 1970. Paying particular attention to prairie agriculture, one finds that in 1966 the realized net income on farming operations in prairie Canada, that is, in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, amounted to some \$1.12 billion. This figure decreases progressively, to the point where, in 1970, the realized net income of farms in prairie Canada amounted to some \$500 million, a reduction of more than 50 per cent, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, when we consider that serious problem and couple it to the effects of the surcharge, we can only assume that the situation will be aggravated and will add to serious disruptions and, indeed, hardships affecting the industry of agriculture.

Before the bill is passed, I believe that the Minister of Agriculture owes to the House and farmers of Canada the duty of supplying those farmers with some definitive answers. His statement the other night in the House was more or less in the form of sweeping generalities. Before the bill progresses to final passage, I think he ought to give this House some explicit facts. For example, I think he should tell the House what those special programs will be to which he referred in his remarks recorded on page 7588 of *Hansard*:

We intend to initiate programs that will indeed provide for the losses, or some of the losses that have been suffered as a result of disruption of those market areas as well.

He owes a duty to this House, and to the people of Canada, to tell us what those special programs will be. I believe he must also tell this House and the primary producer how the producer is to apply for, qualify for, and receive assistance under the provisions of the bill. I believe he owes a duty to the House to advise us whether the regulations of the bill will make specific references to the industry of agriculture. I believe he also must tell us what kind of consultation his department and his officials will have with the respective producers in this country. He should also tell us when the advisory committee under the Agricultural Stabilization Board will be summoned to meet with the minister to discuss the impact of the surtax. I believe he should also answer more fully the question I put to him on September 7 with reference to the kind of assistance that might be forthcoming with regard to the feed grain situation, and barley in particular. At that time he said:

I do not want it to be misunderstood that there will be a complete payment through either the Agricultural Stabilization Board or the employment support act, but there are avenues open and I

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give an undertaking tonight that we are going to look at these on a commodity by commodity basis . . .

I believe we should know what these avenues are and when they will be used. If the minister fails to discharge his responsibilities, we can only assume that he is being bamboozled and overpowered by his cabinet colleagues, that agriculture is not considered as being of priority importance, and that he is merely serving as a puppet for the Trudeau regime.

Mr. John Burton (Regina East): Mr. Speaker, two points stand out in Canada's present situation when we examine the problems with which Bill C-262 attempts to deal. The first is the failure of the government's economic policy and the naked position in which it has left Canada. I suggest that the government's economic policy is now a total shambles. The government has had the rug totally cut out from under its feet, because for some time they have followed a policy of restraint and of holding tight rein on the Canadian economy. In large measure this was in anticipation of an expansion in the United States economy some time in the latter half of this year. Of course, that expansion was bound to come at some time, on the basis of many indications from that country. It was also assumed that there would be significant "slop over" benefits from this expansion for Canada; that had to be taken into account in our own economic planning, to the extent that that might be engaged in by this government. Mr. Speaker, this has not been the case. This is not what happened.

President Nixon's announcement of August 15 was designed to help the United States. It was not designed to help Canada. Actually, it has had the opposite effect. In the final analysis I think this can be said of President Nixon's announcement: Although he wanted to see some adjustments made in the international economic situation, some of which certainly have to come about, in the final analysis, he considered the interests and problems of the United States first, and not those of Canada. This I think is entirely to be expected. Canada continues and has continued to "second guess" the situation.

It is quite obvious that Canadian officials and the Canadian government were nervous, because they thought they had learned a lesson from the last round of Canada's economic cycle. On the upturn, they had not given sufficient weight to the upturn in the United States economy, and that certainly had a significant bearing on what took place in Canada. Now Canadian officials will have to say, "Well, we have made another mistake". Canadians will have to pay for that mistake, Mr. Speaker.

I suggest that the government's economic policy, along with its fiscal and monetary policy, has consisted of one fiasco after another. They could not control inflation, as they said they would and as they said they did. They could not control unemployment. They could not control Canada's economic relations with the United States or bring them into some sort of sensible balance. We have witnessed a record of ineptness, incompetence and bungling by the present government, in my view.

The second major observation that might be made about our present situation is that all this underlines our dependence on the United States economy; it underlines the impact on Canada of the high degree of foreign own-