

\$8 billion. This figure could well reach some \$10 billion by the end of 1978.

Given present conditions it is impossible, I suppose short of having a rich uncle, a rich aunt, or winning a lottery, to enter and succeed in this business of farming. Young farmers now in the business are in serious financial circumstances. Charles Munro, immediate past president of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, speaking at their recent convention in Quebec City, made reference to the fact that three quarters of the 4,465 farm credit loans made last year went to farmers under 35 years of age, and these loans averaged \$73,000. At an interest rate of 10 per cent these borrowers would need some \$61,000 in gross sales to cover expenses. The fact is that only 15 per cent of these borrowers had 1976 gross receipts of \$60,000 or more. In 1976 it should be noted that less than half of all census farms had less than \$15,000 gross sales.

Western livestock farmers in certain areas are showing their dissatisfaction by demonstrations and, indeed, by withholding their livestock from the market. In Atlantic Canada reports indicate heavy financial losses and people leaving the land in the maritimes in record numbers. The primary sector faced serious difficulties two years ago. No action has been taken during that time and the situation has worsened and must be described today as acute. Farmers cannot and will not continue to be ignored or swept aside by this government. Nor will they continue to be content or satisfied listening to the Minister of Agriculture and his entertaining speeches.

It is unacceptable that this minister has proposed not a single major new piece of legislation relative to the agricultural industry since assuming that portfolio in 1972. Certainly the minister has extended programs and brought forward amendments to a few others, but the fact remains that no new major or significant piece of legislation has been introduced. That in itself is clear and ample evidence of the lack of commitment by this government and this minister to the agricultural industry.

It has been said that the hon. member for Essex-Windsor wanted to be Minister of Agriculture in the worst way. I might suggest that if what has happened to farm income is any indication, then he certainly has achieved what he set out to accomplish. I hope for the good of the industry this minister will not avoid seizing upon this golden opportunity to lay before the House today some meaningful and concrete plans to deal specifically with the contents of our motion today. Surely the minister will want to make a positive response to the motion, and surely he will not want to resort to his usual recital of ongoing government programs, support and subsidy payments to producers. We must remember that when many of these support programs and subsidy payments are triggered into action, that in itself signals financial difficulties within that particular industry.

Producers deserve and will demand a firm commitment from government that it is prepared, not simply by political statements but rather by action and appropriate legislation, to deal effectively with the industry in order to ensure a return to financial stability. Producers above all are as anxious as any that inflation and stability within our economy be improved

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and resolved. Producers are heavy spenders, not because of their human nature but because of the nature of their businesses. They are large purchasers of goods and services and, consequently, are suffering extensively because of the mismanagement of the economy by this government.

Producers want and deserve the assurance that they will have access to a greater share of the domestic market. Import penetration has seriously damaged not only primary producers but the whole food processing chain, food processors and manufacturers. We need action and legislation, not to prohibit international trade but rather to limit it to an acceptable level which will permit and create an ongoing incentive for a healthy industry here at home in Canada.

We as a party are convinced that if we are to save our rapidly disappearing fruit and vegetable industry this government must implement seasonal surcharges and automatic surtaxes on a commodity by commodity basis at appropriately prescribed levels based on historic trade patterns. It is essential that this government bargain vigorously and successfully to restore equity in our tariff rates. These rates have existed for over a quarter of a century.

This government must adopt a firm policy of fair trade before free trade. Producers can and will adapt to changing market conditions, but they should not be expected to compete in any marketplace, particularly the marketplace here at home, against heavily subsidized food products and commodities.

Dairy farmers are still looking for a long term dairy policy, not just in words or printed political statements, but in reality and in practice. We recognize that this policy would obviously have to be changed from time to time, but these changes should be negotiated by the industry with the government and they should be signalled to the industry at least 12 months in advance. The dairy farmers continue to call for a reduction of 10 million to 15 million pounds of cheese imports, yet the present government continues to ignore that request. Cheese imports even today remain at the high level of 50 million pounds.

Perhaps the minister will seek an opportunity to address himself to this question as well this afternoon. I hope he will release the study he referred to when the \$13.5 million consumer subsidy was dropped recently. This was a decision taken without any consultation with producers or consumers. If any case could be made for such a move, then common sense would indicate that a phase out approach should be utilized.

Beef producers have gone through three of the worst years in the history of their industry. These people want and deserve more up to date and more accurate market information. They must be commended for taking such action on their own. Since 1976 they have called for a Canadian meat import law, yet even today no such legislation appears on the order paper. The record reveals on numerous occasions our full commitment to that type of legislation. Producers and their respective organizations have sought an extension of capital gains deferral to partnerships and incorporated farms.