

huge markets in Europe that the prairies were able to satisfy. These were the golden years. Wheat was the king of the grains.

These villages and towns developed every five or six miles along the railway tracks. Farmers hauled maybe 20–25 bushels of wheat to the elevator in a horse-drawn wagon in the very early days. Those days are long gone and the reason for that is not a trade war today. It is the march of history. It is technology and advances in machinery and equipment. It is road building, communication and technology. It may have taken that pioneer farmer all day to take a load of grain to the elevator a mile or two away. Now they move a trailer of grain—huge amounts of grain—vast distances in that time.

• (1220)

The end result has been a consolidation. Many of these small towns and villages have ceased to exist and many more, I am sad to say, are in their death throes. It is not because of a particular policy of a government of any stripe. I say this not in any partisan way. It is simply reality. It is a result of technology and of markets.

I do not think there is much use in clinging to the old myth of the role of government to preserve rural Canada as it might have been or as someone idyllically remembers it 40 or 50 years ago when the population was at its peak. I am not so sure that those days were particularly rosy anyway. Oldtimers tell me that they do not recall so many wonderful times.

I guess the bottom line is that this movement from the rural areas to the urban ones is something that is a result of technology. It is happening in Saskatchewan. It has happened across Canada. It has happened world-wide.

We are told that back in the 1930s something like a third of all Canadians lived on the farm. Today I think that figure is in the area of perhaps 3 per cent or 4 per cent.

Over the past number of years, many programs have been generated to try to deal with the problems of agriculture. It is not easy to do because agriculture speaks with many voices. Sometimes people who live in the north see things differently from those who live in the south. Those who live in the west naturally see things differently from those who live in the east. If one is into livestock, one sees things differently than one would if one was a straight grain farmer.

Supply

There is an enormous difficulty in devising and developing national programs that work and that are seen to be satisfactory to all concerned.

In the past, it has been shown that programs like area-based crop insurance, like the WGSA which triggered huge areas and which had a five-year rolling average which turned out to be inadequate at the time when it was most needed. These programs have been discarded and a new generation of safety-net programs have been brought forward.

These programs, GRIP and NISA, were not developed in isolation. They were the result of many months and, indeed, many years of work, not just by federal and provincial governments, but by producer groups and by individual farmers. They were designed to try to overcome the obvious shortcomings of some of the programs that preceded them.

Those safety-net programs are in their infancy at this time. There are problems with them, yet at the same time they do seem to be working across most of the country. There are some criteria such as individuality, certainty, predictability and bankability that were central to these programs.

It is an unfortunate fact that GRIP has not been allowed to work within the province of Saskatchewan, which is a major grain-growing sector of the country. It is one of the sources of enormous frustration as related to me by producers within my constituency.

Over the past number of years, a variety of government programs have delivered unprecedented support into the grains and oilseeds sector. I believe that the numbers for Saskatchewan, for example, over the last six or seven years average out to something like slightly over \$20,000 in support from the federal government to each farm operation within the province of Saskatchewan.

The irony is that for the taxpayer obviously it is too much. Yet for the hard-pressed producer who has been buffeted by historically low grain prices owing to subsidies beyond our borders it is not enough. So we have this fundamental problem. It is reality.

Canada is up against the United States and the European Community in this subsidy war. These countries have large populations, they have deep pockets and they have a much smaller dependence on export than Canada does.