

*The Budget—Mr. Halliday*

Oxford cheese when they visited our riding during the recent election campaign. In addition, Oxford is blessed with a significant mixture of other branches of agriculture, including beef cattle, hogs, poultry, tobacco, cereal and feed grains, increasingly large acreages of corn, turnips and apples.

Our urban balance is maintained by the city of Woodstock and the towns of Ingersoll and Tillsonburg, each of which makes a significant contribution by way of manufacturing and light industry of a remarkably varied nature, much of the products of which are exported across Canada and around the world. This segment of our economy continues to make significant strides, with a good growth potential for the future. Although Oxford, by this description, may sound like a land of milk and honey, we do have our problems in spite of three forays into our riding by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) during the last election campaign. A constituent of mine of a different political persuasion than I, but nonetheless a friend, has strongly urged me to say something nice about the minister.

● (1550)

Well, Mr. Speaker, like other new members I have got to know that he, too, is an honourable gentleman. But more than that, he has provided the farmers of Oxford and, indeed, Canada with an unparalleled challenge by way of an agricultural policy with the ups and downs of a roller-coaster. Like the rest of Canada, our farmers suffer from the same insecurity generated by complete lack of a consistent agricultural policy. Or, again, take the matter of excessive government intervention in the dairy industry. I quote Mr. Philippe Pariseault, chairman of the National Dairy Council of Canada, in speaking to the council back in September:

Here is a partial list of new intrusions by our benevolent federal benefactors: moisture content of cheese, fat content of butter and cheese, fat content of ice cream and frozen desserts, fat content of yogurt and cottage cheese, generic classification of cheeses, recall code procedure, Companies Act, competition bill, environment Canada regulations, termination of the fluid milk subsidy, enlargement and extension of milk powder subsidy, Maple Leaf grade symbol, increase in support price for butter and powder, maximum coliform content for cheeses, preparation of brief for GATT, preparation of brief for Food Prices Review Board, report on the dairy industry by Dr. McFarlane, regulations for partially skimmed milk, seminar on the dairy industry held by FPRB, emphasis on violations under Weights and Measures Act, Health and Welfare research projects, codex alimentarius—margarine standards.

And, as Mr. Pariseault points out, this all takes more staff, more government spending and either more taxes or more inflation of the money supply. I think it was Thoreau who once said: "Government is best which governs not at all." Mr. Pariseault went on to say:

There doesn't seem to be anyone in Canada in charge of co-ordinating the over-all federal government's concern and intervention in our industry. We've had Agriculture Canada, Health and Welfare, Consumer and Corporate Affairs, Statistics Canada, Weights and Measures, Environment Canada, dairy branch, Canadian Dairy Commission, food additives, etc. All get into the act and talk about developing more rules and regulations for our industry during this past year.

It is difficult to be too critical about a great deal of this government's activity, but it's the proliferation that is so overwhelming and the timing appears to lack any co-ordination whatsoever. After all, one can have an excess of filet mignon and sex.

It would be redundant and time-consuming for me to detail more of these problems now. But by the same token, many of our industrial and small business concerns and farmers have struggled along during the past six years with inadequate financial support in the way of federal small business loans, which just often are not available, together with a government policy not always favourable to the growth and development of Canadian-owned industry.

I would like to touch on one more specific problem which is not unique to Oxford but concerns southwestern Ontario in general. I speak of the appalling lack of public transportation in the rural areas, a problem which appears to be completely ignored by our present Liberal government. Twenty years ago, virtually all the villages and smaller towns in my area were served several times daily by either bus or train, and in many instances by both. Gradually over the last 20 years these means of public transportation have been withdrawn to such an extent that many communities now have no access to larger urban centres. This is a serious handicap for pensioners, for those who do not drive and for single car families where the breadwinner has the car all day. In many instances it causes commuters to waste gasoline energy when they would otherwise use public vehicles for going to and from work in the cities. At a time when efforts are being made to encourage people to live outside the large urban and metropolitan areas, this lack of public transportation is a significant deterrent.

All rail passenger systems were discontinued in midwestern Ontario on November 1, 1970. This was done as a result of a decision by the railway transport committee of the Canadian Transport Commission under the authority of the National Transportation Act of 1967. Public hearings were held to review this measure in the spring of 1972, in London, Chatham, Stratford and Walkerton. It has been 2½ years since the public hearings were held and release of the report by the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications which recommended that the rail service for this area be reinstated. This recommendation of the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications was submitted to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand) in a letter sent on April 3, 1974, to the Hon. E. J. Benson, president of the Canadian Transport Commission. The minister referred to expressions of concern by the public and members of parliament that public transport services in the region were inadequate, or in some cases non-existent. He requested that the commission, in co-operation with provincial authorities, undertake a review of the situation. At present the passenger rail service has not been reinstated.

Having spent thousands of dollars on public rail hearings in this area, and with the report of the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications recommending the reinstatement of rail service, why has this government done nothing to implement the recommendations or offer a viable alternative such as bus service? The Fifth Report and Review by the Canadian Council on Rural Development, dated December, 1973, and entitled "Commitment to Rural Canada" states, on page 13, under the heading "Rural Predicaments" that improvements in communication and transportation networks make accessibility easier and extend the size of the area served by