

Agricultural Policies

In one breath the government says that our producers are producing too much and are too efficient, and in another breath the task force comes out with the suggestion that these people should seek training in order to do a more efficient job. How irresponsible and nonsensical can such recommendations be! Again, this makes me wonder whether the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the government of the country are really suggesting to the agricultural producers that they should do their own thing and sell their own products even though there are already avenues open to them to look after the situation.

I am sure all of us appreciate the fact that Canada's agricultural industry is in a state of transition. At the same time, however, many millions of people throughout this world are in a starvation situation. Canada is faced with an increase in her bilateral food aid program. While this may take the form of outright payments in the form of local currencies, there is still a need for some concessional terms in respect of our produce. Again, we can refer to situations which exist in the United States. There they have concessional terms. With these concessional terms there is a requirement that those countries which produce wheat shall also produce commercial grain. This, of course, has resulted in Canada losing a great many of her markets.

We also know that today Canada actually lags behind the amount of \$100 million in foreign aid programs. When we speak of cutting back in our produce while this situation exists, I am a little amazed. It would seem that in effect we are telling the people in these areas that we are not concerned about them even to the extent of concessional or bilateral aid and long-term credit programs.

There has been considerable debate in this House, particularly during the question period, about bartering our wheat. We all agree that the bartering of grain, if it affects the orderly marketing of grain, is not in the interests of our agricultural economy. At the same time, however, the United States has Public Law 480, title 3, which allows for the bartering of United States' grain to meet the needs of United States government agencies. If at any time this government could arrange the barter of grain with underdeveloped or even developed nations which would not affect the balance under the Canadian Wheat Board regulations, I suggest there is really nothing wrong in so doing. If it does not mean disruption of orderly marketing I

should like the Minister without Portfolio to tell the House why he is so adamantly opposed to bartering in respect of grain.

There is another point which I think should be made absolutely clear. We heard the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) speak about opposition to Bill C-197. The New Democratic Party is absolutely in favour of a national marketing board. At the same time we want to make sure that the government of the day realizes there must be ample producer representation on that board. If the Minister of Agriculture, with all his great words of wisdom and criticism, today had stood up in respect of Bill C-197 and said there would be producer representation on the board, I am sure the bill would have gone to the committee, would have come back to the House and probably would be in effect at this time. That is, if the government had ever intended that it should come into effect in that way.

We have also heard many people say that there has been a belittling of the agricultural economy. If there is any basis on which the government can suggest that the opposition parties are trying to belittle the agricultural economy, the members of the government should stand in their places and say so. The fact remains that the government of the day is belittling the agricultural economy and the producers. Members of the government, particularly those from central Canada, when they make remarks about the agricultural industry in Canada generally are, in effect, belittling the agricultural economy.

I was pleased to hear the Minister of Agriculture say that agriculture is one of the most important industries in Canada. I wish he would tell some of his colleagues in the cabinet that agriculture is also important in Canada and that they should realize this fact if they do not intend to have a complete breakdown in our country at this time. We know there is an agricultural crisis in Canada. The government is also aware of this fact. When we look at the situation in central Canada of various implement manufacturing companies and automobile workers, and consider the vast amount of unemployment as well as the adverse effect this has on the agricultural economy, we should realize it is high time something was done to give some capital input to the farmers.

We know that Canada could immediately supply grain to some of her overseas markets. However, the same thing happens in that regard that has happened too often. There is a lack of selling capability on the part of our

[Mr. Skoberg.]