

a smokescreen of figures over the whole unemployment situation in Canada. Those people who are unemployed must realize that a smokescreen of figures is very unpalatable. To coin an old phrase, it is still the same old gang sitting across from us. They have not changed very much.

It is indeed a pleasure for me to take my seat in this House once again as the Member of Parliament for Lisgar. I would like to devote a portion of my speech this afternoon to what I believe are the major agricultural concerns that face the country at the present time. Agriculture is the principal interest of many people in my constituency, just as it is of people in many other parts of Canada. It is my principal interest here in the House of Commons. While it is heartening to see that agriculture is once again in a relatively buoyant condition, the agricultural community must guard against a false sense of security. A slight fluctuation in world markets could result in a return to over supply in basic commodities, a situation which the agricultural community must always guard against.

I am sorry that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) left the chamber part way through the speech by the Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Stanfield:** You can't blame him for that.

**Mr. Murta:** No, you can't blame him for that, but I had hoped he would be in the chamber to take note of what we in this party will be saying about agriculture. However, I wish him good luck in his new portfolio because I am sure he will need all the luck he can muster during the next few weeks. I believe that in the Conservative party at the present time we have the best collection of people from all across Canada to represent agriculture and devise an agricultural policy that will more fully benefit all areas and segments of Canada. I do not believe this was the situation in the last parliament from 1968 onwards, and I think that resulted, during the last election, in the defeat of the former minister of agriculture. I believe he is now a Liberal organizer in that province and his job is almost as large as the job he had in 1968.

• (1610)

The buoyancy that our grain sales are experiencing at the present time comes from the misfortune of other countries and not necessarily from aggressive marketing approaches instituted by the present Liberal government. While the situation in agriculture is relatively buoyant, we must not overlook the fact that realized net income of farmers across Canada is decreasing at the present time. Costs have been rising at a very fast rate. All agricultural inputs such as land, buildings, machinery, fertilizer and chemical controls, have been increasing in price and the cost-price squeeze that has affected farmers over the past few years has not lessened to any great extent.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the government is faced with some very serious questions and problems in the agriculture industry. With the great process of review and re-examination which the government has been forced to undertake following the election, I hope that it will be asking some very serious questions about agriculture and the people who will be involved in agriculture, over the next few weeks.

*The Address—Mr. Murta*

Above all, I believe that the government must question its use of what I would like to call band-aid and patchwork solutions, with their constant emphasis on the short-term view of things that affect agriculture. I believe that the agricultural community must opt for the longer view of things; they must plan for more than the immediate future and those plans must be concrete. Programs such as Lift are a good example of the short-term thinking I am talking about. The Lower Inventory for Tomorrow program has come back in the last few months to haunt the government. The main purpose of that program was to relieve the government of the political embarrassment of a huge wheat surplus which they had failed to move. If they had not been so short-sighted in their point of view and had the interest of the farmers at heart they would not have introduced the program called Operation Lift. Because of that program, Canada does not now have the inventories necessary to take advantage of record prices in international grain markets, so millions of dollars have been lost to the western economy.

Mr. Speaker, the government must examine its attitude toward grain storage. It has to ask itself whether the present system is adequate and if it is providing for the farmers' needs? Should additional grain storage be built, not only in Canada but in countries with which we trade? Should Canada help finance the construction of that grain storage to provide a necessary source of inventory for a very valuable commodity?

We also have to look very closely at the feed grains aspect of our policy in Canada. I believe we must have an equitable feed grains pricing system for supplies to all parts of Canada, and not only to certain areas.

Mr. Speaker, it is also my belief that the government must take a long, hard look at the dairy industry in Canada. I believe that in consultation with people at all levels of the dairy industry some very basic questions must be asked. I refer to such questions as: what kind of an industry do we really need in Canada and, is the dairy industry more efficient now than in 1965 prior to the creation of the Canadian Dairy Commission? One very basic question is whether supply-management will work, and another is whether limiting production and entry into an industry really helps it in the long run. It is my belief that the Canadian Dairy Commission has set national policy without stating, in specific operational terms, where the industry will be in two, three or five years.

Like many other people, Mr. Speaker, I believe that planning has its limitations but plans arrived at by people whose future economic welfare is at stake are far more relevant than ad hoc programs developed and administered by non-elected bureaucrats. I think it is clearly the role of the politician to provide leadership, but it is the responsibility and the right of the people in industry to provide the ideas and the spark needed. The present legislative framework does not provide the dairy industry with the adequate long range approach which I believe it needs so desperately.

In another area, with regard to pricing in the grain industry, I believe that the government must again ask itself if what it has done in the past is good enough for the future. Here I come back to the two-price system for wheat which was introduced some time ago and it is my