

Government Orders

constituents. I am sure it must be on the minds of his constituents in a very large urban riding, as he mentioned in his address, regarding the security of supplies of food. We have heard in the last two days about the erosion of farm programs by this government. This concern is endorsed by almost all of the farm organizations in Canada and today was even further reinforced at a luncheon meeting of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture when Mr. Jack Proulx, a member of the CFA executive, made an impassioned speech opposing this bill.

With the current trend of this government toward the free market philosophy and the dismantling of farm programs, I want to ask my colleague if he has given any thought to making food production in Canada a matter of national security. He talked about security of food and I wonder if he might give us some of his thoughts on making it a national security, security of supply of high quality Canadian grown food for the Canadian consumers.

Mr. Wappel: Mr. Speaker, it is almost incredible that we would even have to be discussing whether or not we should make agriculture a national priority. It is incredible in a country like this. We have the second largest land mass in the world. We have incredible and vast areas devoted strictly to agriculture.

You can go back as far as you want in the history of mankind, even as far back as ancient Egypt when there were the seven lean years and the seven years of plenty. Of course, we should always be harvesting our agricultural produce in such a way that we never end up in a situation of want.

This is a country of great plenty, this is a country that can for the most part supply itself. It seems to me that it should be a given, not something for discussion, but rather a given that a national objective of ours is that we are not caught short at any time and that we always have sufficient food to feed our people and, indeed, sufficient food not only to feed our people, but to help others in depressed areas of the world in the event of a tragic famine of some nature.

In answer to the question, I would simply say that we should not even be talking about it. It should be automatic.

Mr. Hovdebo: Mr. Speaker, I want to follow up on the statement and question of the hon. member. The idea that we should produce enough food to feed ourselves is something that has become lost over the last number of years. We now have come to the position where we are thinking of rural Canada less as a producer of food and more as a place where people might want to live if they want that lifestyle.

Rural Canada is under a tremendous amount of pressure because we in Canada have not made it a requirement to keep agriculture going. I would like to ask the member, as an urban member, if he is prepared to allow the price of food to go to the level which would be required for us to stay viable in agriculture all across Canada.

Mr. Wappel: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. friend for his question. It is a rather broad question and I am not quite sure that I understand the full import of it.

Is my hon. friend suggesting that for some reason an apple that, for example, presently costs 80 cents really should cost \$2.50? I do not know whether that is what the suggestion is. Speaking as an urban member, obviously people want to be able to afford to buy food. It is very important in order to be able to buy food that we produce it.

It seems logical that foods produced in our country and shipped to points in our country should be less expensive than foods imported from other countries. I am not entirely sure what the hon. member meant by his question and how it related to urban families wanting a rural lifestyle. Beyond that, I do not know whether I have responded fully, but I am sorry, I did not quite understand the question.

Mr. Hovdebo: Mr. Speaker, I would like to clarify it. Farmers in Canada are going broke because the price of the product that they are producing is too low. Right now there are over 10,000 farmers in Saskatchewan with foreclosure notices.

They are going broke because the price that is being paid for the product that they are producing is too low. It is too low because it can be produced more cheaply in other parts of the world. The hon. member's suggestion that we should produce enough food to feed ourselves would require that we pay enough for that food so that the farmers who produce it can survive. That is not true in grains; it is not true in apples. We will not pay enough for apples for apple farmers to survive. It is not true in grapes; it is not true in most of the areas of agriculture.