

Agricultural Policies

the Department of Agriculture have undertaken a very extensive research program, the objective of which is to increase the efficiency and the productivity of Canadian agriculture. Of course, as a result of that, we hope to improve the income of Canadian farmers to make them more competitive in the domestic as well as the export markets. I ask sincerely, does the hon. member mean that we should reverse that policy?

We have a far-reaching program of grading and standards that are designed to improve farmers' returns through creating buyer confidence in Canadian products. That is also a very important part of the policies of the Department of Agriculture. Is the member asking that we reverse that policy? Mr. Speaker, we have a series of programs designed, and in effect, that are part of the over-all policy for the better utilization of livestock, poultry, crop seeds and so on, to promote superior performance. This is a very far-reaching comprehensive policy designed for the purpose of improving the seed and livestock that we have. Is the member asking that that policy be reversed?

• (2:10 p.m.)

We also have a crop insurance program that is a mechanism whereby farmers can protect themselves, with government assistance, against some of the vagaries of climate and other natural hazards that beset them from time to time. This crop insurance program has been built up over a number of years, and it continues to grow with other crops being added to the programs within the various provinces, and indeed with more provinces coming within the national program. Is the member asking that we reverse that program? We have a wide ranging policy dealing with a meat inspection system, and we have similar programs dealing with Canadian crops to keep them free of disease to which they would be subjected a great deal more if we did not have this kind of inspection system. Is the member asking that that policy be reversed?

We have provided protection for farmers against undue fluctuations in the market place with respect to many commodities operating under the Agricultural Stabilization Act. That act was not brought in by this government. I believe it was introduced about 1958 or 1959. There have been some modifications made since then, and I must say that the modifications have been improvements to the act. During the last ten years or so there have

[Mr. Olson.]

been many cases where the policy, taking its authority from this act, has been very useful in getting farmers over difficult marketing periods. Is the member asking that that policy be reversed? At the present time about \$135 to \$140 million per year is distributed to support the income of farmers from various commodities, but particularly dairy products. Is the member asking that we withdraw or reverse that program?

Throughout the years, and more recently within the last few months, we have made major changes to the Farm Credit Corporation's policy, the most recent being that we have allowed a wider range of their activities and functions to provide credit for such things as diversification and for debt consolidation. Is the member asking that that policy be reversed? I could continue enumerating policies for a long while, Mr. Speaker, but I will mention just a few more.

Some months ago we announced a feed freight assistance program that would be in effect for all of this year, from April 1, 1970 to March 31, 1971, paying a very substantial portion of the freight costs on feed that is brought from Thunder Bay into the eastern feeding regions, as well as from the prairies into British Columbia. Is the member asking that that policy be reversed?

We now have before the House Bill C-197, which has been introduced in response to the requests made over a long period of time by farmers, provincial governments and marketing boards. These requests go back at least 15 years according to my memory. Requests for this kind of legislation have been coming forward for perhaps even longer but, as I say, for about 15 years that I can remember rather vividly. Is the member asking that we reverse this policy decision? It is not a policy that is operative at the present time because certain members opposite seem to think that they can do a service to someone—I fail to see to whom—by talking this out and delaying it.

Mr. Horner: Who is delaying it?

Mr. Olson: But I know, Mr. Speaker, that the farmers of this country and their representatives want this legislation to come forward in the House, so that it may be passed to committee and if necessary be amended.

Mr. Nowlan: Bring it forward.

Mr. Olson: They talk now about bringing it forward. Mr. Speaker, we have had that legislation in front of the House on seven different days.