

Agricultural Subsidies

situation in which hundreds or even thousands of farmers would be wiped out by one or two major crop losses.

The value of our program is reflected in the way in which the United States moved to adopt a similar program. There are those who contend that lending programs for farmers are actually subsidy programs which cost the Government money. In my view that is a fallacy. Anyone who would support that argument is obviously misinformed, at least as far as the federal Government of Canada is concerned.

Let us consider the Farm Credit Corporation. During the current fiscal year, between April 1 and September 15 the corporation approved 3,257 regular loans for a total of \$406.5 million. During the same period, 60 loans valued at \$1.8 million were approved by the corporation under the Farm Syndicates Act. In addition, the FCC approved 902 loans for a total value of \$166.8 million under the corporation's Special Farm Financial Assistance Program.

However, the Farm Credit Corporation does not subsidize farmers. All of its costs are covered by the interest margins charged to farmers and it is in fact working toward a progressively larger return on the Government's capital. If one consults farmers in Ohio on the other side of the border of my constituency, one finds that they look upon the FCC as a subsidy arrangement of a kind and type that they deem should be counted when one determines whether or not a subsidy is being provided to our growers.

The Special Farm Financial Assistance Program is somewhat of an exception, because it is an interest rebate program. Between November, 1981 and the spring of 1984, the FCC expects to approve \$345 million in loans under the special program. The way it works is that farmers who received loans under the first \$45 million of the program will receive a 5 per cent interest rebate for the first two years of their loans. The interest rebate on loans approved out of the other \$300 million is 4 per cent.

But let me stress that the corporation estimates that about \$29 million in rebates will be paid out by the federal Government altogether. Let me re-emphasize that the Government will not be losing money on this program. Also I point out that in 1981-82 the FCC had \$10.9 million in retained earnings. As well, in the three years prior to that the corporation actually made a profit. All in all it is extremely difficult to compare domestic programs, but perhaps we should look a bit longer at the export scene.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order, please.

● (1825)

Mr. Vic Althouse (Humboldt-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker in the remaining few minutes those on the Government side can contemplate whether this motion should be accepted.

The Hon. Member for Essex-Kent (Mr. Daudlin) presented some information that causes us to wonder about the honesty of the response we are getting to this request to table studies having to do with the amount of subsidies which apply to different agricultural commodities. The Member clearly stated

the proportions of subsidy that exist for barley. On three or four other commodities, he went right down to the last decimal point on the proportions of subsidy that apply in the United States, Canada and in the European Economic Community. We do not understand how those figures can be arrived at when the Government can reply to my colleague from Regina East (Mr. de Jong) that it does not have such figures and, therefore, it cannot table them and make them public. The only way to arrive at a percentage or proportion is to have figures from which you can work. This gives a very clear indication that the studies have been done but, for reasons not made clear in this debate, the Government has chosen not to make them public.

I hope that Members opposite will see that there is no advantage in keeping this information from the Opposition and the public and that it will table the papers requested by my colleague for Regina East.

Mr. Len Gustafson (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I do not want to talk out this motion. Therefore, at what time must I resume my seat?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): The Chair should inform the House that, in keeping with the order passed earlier by the House and in the spirit of that order, the debate will adjourn at 32 minutes past the hour.

Mr. Gustafson: Mr. Speaker, it will be too bad if this motion is talked out because it is very important to agriculture. It will indicate the priority which this Government places on agriculture. We have had a long debate on the statutory Crow rate, Bill C-155.

One could spend hours on the importance of research and on what has not been researched by this Government. The farmers will spend hours on it. I have been appointed the Wheat Board critic. I have done a bit of research. The intensity that is required to bring together the necessary research to point out how important it is for farmers to compete in the international marketplace is most important to agriculture today.

The remarks made by the Hon. Member for Essex-Kent (Mr. Daudlin) are very contradictory in the area of supporting the position of agriculture and the position of the farmer. This is most important. Some research that I have done indicates that Canadian farmers are being supported by less than 17 per cent while in the United States it is 33 per cent and in the European Economic Community it is up to 55 per cent. It is most important that this information and this research be laid upon the Table so that farmers can understand the direction being followed.

It would be a major mistake for the Government to move against this kind of motion because of the repercussions it would have on agriculture and our farmers. The debate on the statutory Crow rate, Bill C-155, is a prime example as the Government is imposing a freight rate increase which the farmers cannot afford at this time. Research would prove this without a doubt and would support our amendment which