

Suggested Payment to Western Farmers

the Prairies remained the same or was larger in 1970 than in the five-year period I have mentioned. If you allocate the sum of \$92 million to livestock production in 1970, which is likely to be a conservative figure, you reduce the net from grain growing to about \$40 million in Saskatchewan. That represents only about \$500 per farm in that province in 1970.

As a rule, I am not given to citing statistics in speeches I make in the House or, indeed, outside the House because they are usually a little difficult to follow. I have done so this time and I will cite some other statistics. As a member who represents a central Canada constituency, is well acquainted with the urban centres in all parts of Canada and, I hope, acquainted with the farm communities across the country, I feel it is important for all the people of Canada to realize that the conditions of the western grain farmer in 1970 and, indeed, in 1969, have been really desperate.

● (12:10 p.m.)

As a group, grain growers have been operating at virtually a loss. They must survive on depreciation and using whatever farm produce they can for their families. The disastrous income position of the grains growers is one of the reasons for introducing this motion. I submit that it highlights the very real problem facing Canadian grain farmers and Canadian agriculture generally and the need for all members of this House, regardless from what part of Canada they may come, to pay careful attention to the future of this essential industry in Canada.

We who live in central Canada, including, for example, the workers in my constituency, all of metropolitan Toronto and Brantford, which is represented by the new member whom I had the honour to introduce this morning, are concerned about the widespread massive unemployment which this government has inflicted upon this country. We are concerned about the overcrowded and impossible living conditions in our large urban centres. But we must not be so self-concerned about our position in these centres as to ignore other areas.

As we in this party have always suggested, we must begin to realize that the western farmers, the western grain growers in particular, are in precisely the same kind of desperate situation as the unemployed workers in the cities. For literally 35 years, as a member of this party, and with the honour of now being its leader, I have said to the people of Canada that when there is an economic difficulty in this country it is never limited to either farmers or urban dwellers. It invariably hits both sections of the Canadian community just as severely.

This is one of the reasons why I cannot but deprecate deeply and feel very strongly distressed at the continuing attempts in this country—an attempt is now being made by the premier of Saskatchewan during the present provincial election campaign—to divide the farmer and the worker, to say to the farmer that the industrial worker is in some way his enemy and to say to the worker in the city that his high cost of living is due to what the farmer

is getting for his produce. I say to the industrial workers in this country that this is not so.

The farmers in Canada have been receiving incomes that are all out of proportion to their efforts and investment. The increase in price which the farmer has received over the years has been minimal compared with the actual increase in price in the retail store which the industrial worker visits and where he spends a great deal of his money. Much of the increase in food prices has gone to the large packing corporations, the large processing corporations and the middle men along the way. In all areas of farming, only a little trickle has gone to the farmer.

The grain grower is in a difficult and desperate situation, as is the hog producer. When I visited Saskatchewan a couple a months ago, I was shown an actual invoice by a hog producer. For a 300-pound hog he received a net of \$2.47. I think he received three cents per pound in that particular instance and after all the various deductions had been made he was left with \$2.47.

I wish to emphasize that the point I am raising is not a matter only of agricultural policy nor a matter which concerns merely the farmers of Canada. It is a matter which concerns the entire Canadian society and impinges on the entire Canadian economy. I want the city folk of this country, including myself, all my friends in the unions, unorganized workers, the employed and the unemployed, to appreciate that the policies of the government have not been harmful only to the industrial workers. They have placed the Canadian farmers, the western grain farmers in particular, in a position every bit as desperate as that of the unemployed in this country. The government has been consistent in its mismanagement of Canada's economy, whether agricultural or industrial, whether in the east, centre or the west.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: If you look at the farm situation from the point of view of cost you get some understanding of what has happened. While the gross receipts and the net incomes of the farmers have been fluctuating, and have been steadily dropping in the past while, farm expenses have been rising at a steady pace. The cost of farm machinery has increased. The cost of farm labour has also increased as it should have. The costs of all the things that farmers use have been steadily rising. There is no reason to think that farm expenses will begin to decline because there is no reason to believe that the cost of anything in Canada is likely to decline. On the contrary, in over 200 years of history we have learned that there is a steady rise in prices in our kind of society.

The so-called stabilization plan, which the ministers concerned have introduced into the House and which is now before a committee of the House, makes no mention of the question of farm expenses. It makes no suggestion about the need to stabilize or in some way make up for the continuing increase in farm costs. In round figures, Mr. Speaker, farm expenses and depreciation charges relating to crop production on the Prairies rose from \$500

[Mr. Lewis.]