

*Agricultural Policies*

Grains Council and other groups, following which they finally produced the legislation.

This idea has been kicking around for over 20 years but the government was not able to come forward with legislation until a very late stage in the session. Now it appears very doubtful that the legislation will be passed in time to be introduced effectively during the coming crop year. This is one of the most pressing needs in the total grains picture if, in fact, we are going to improve our marketing prospects in the worldwide picture. We also have the farm products marketing bill before us, again introduced at a late stage of the session.

• (4:30 p.m.)

There has been some controversy about who did what and who didn't do what. I do not intend to get involved in that question. I simply want to make it clear that my party supports the principle of this bill. We want to see it pressed forward. We feel some changes should be made in the legislation, but we are wholeheartedly in favour of its principle. We feel there is need for machinery whereby farmers can be involved more effectively in the operation of the legislation.

It is also timely to discuss some of these matters today in view of the crisis which is faced in western Canada. Operation Lift can only be termed a disaster. There is a lack of guarantees and of underwriting with respect to some of the very unstable features in the agricultural situation of western Canada.

We have seen a great deal of administrative bungling by the government over the past two years. Examples have been given of it on many occasions in this House and I do not intend to go over that ground again. But it is important to know something of the government's approach, which leaves something to be desired. It seems that the government is taking the attitude, "We know what is good for you." This is best illustrated in Operation Lift, when the government devised its own program in fundamental variance to that which the task force on agriculture is recommending. This has become clear since publication of the task force report. Nevertheless, the government has bulled ahead with its program regardless of objections from every quarter in western Canada. In the marketing legislation bill the government is taking the attitude, "You are not going to have any say in your own affairs. We are going to do this whether you like it or not." Throughout this

whole series of agricultural programs and other programs affecting rural Canada there has been insensitivity and callousness displayed by the government to the detriment of the public good.

I want to make specific reference to one matter involving exchange rates, something which has been debated during the current week. Certainly members of the NDP approve the government's measure in principle. We feel it is in the national interest that there be a floating exchange rate, but it does not solve all our problems. It simply provides new opportunities to deal with some of our serious economic problems. As I indicated in my statement on behalf of the NDP in reply to the minister's statement on Monday, there are of course problems. There are bound to be, in an economy as complex as Canada's. The problems created for the export industries must be taken into account. In his statement during the emergency debate on Tuesday the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) indicated that consideration would be given to special cases where problems have been created. In answer to my question as to whether he considered the 6-cent drop in the price of wheat, which took place the next day, to be a special case that should be considered, the minister said yes. I welcome his statement in that regard and I hope he will come forward with action and a program to deal with this problem in the very near future.

This step is going to hurt western Canada. The farmers of western Canada should not be expected to bear the load of this particular policy when the policy is in the national interest. If it is in the national interest, and if problems are created in particular sectors, then those sectors of the economy should be compensated. I also note the impact that current conditions are having on the urban economy and indeed on the entire Canadian economy. In my own province of Saskatchewan, where there is a serious economic situation, we have experienced within the past year a decline of 18,000 in our population. This reflects the over-all state of conditions in the province. Retail trade, to take one economic indicator, was down by more than 9 per cent in the first three months of this year. In my own city of Regina well over 100 businesses were forced to shut down during the past year. Other centres in Canada are feeling the effects of this situation. Brantford, where the farm machinery industry is locat-