

*Agricultural Policies*

support the price and to guarantee it to the farmers of western Canada for a relatively short period of time. They took good care to point out that it would be supported for a relatively short period of time. I say that at this time there are even better reasons for the institution of price support to bolster and maintain farm income even at that level, and this despite the fact that costs to farmers have increased since the agreement was signed. Indeed, the task force on agriculture recommended that we do away with the regular reports of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics which reflect the cost of goods and services to farmers. Whether or not the task force was right remains open to debate. What they said was that the index is out of date and does not accurately reflect the real costs with which farmers are faced at the present time. In the light of these facts, surely there is excellent reason for supporting the price of grain, and indeed of other farm products, and for ensuring that the farmers remain at least on an even keel during this period of rapid transition.

I would say that the trade programs which we have followed have been ad hoc. From what I can see, there has not been a definite pattern in our trade programs. The Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin), on coming back from a trip to New Zealand and Australia a year ago, I believe, announced to the House that New Zealand beef and meat products would have increased access to Canada. This is what happened. According to the information which I received from the Department of Agriculture, our meat products imports from Australia increased from 9,306,000 pounds in 1967 to some 29,388,000 pounds in 1969, and from New Zealand the increase was from 5,506,000 pounds in 1967 to 74,803,000 pounds in 1969. These are pretty substantial increases, and according to press reports much of this product is moving on through to the United States. I inquired as to how much was moving through to the United States, but was unable to get any figure.

Surely we ought to have a clear, constructive approach to our trade policies. Those in farming and agriculture do not suggest that we can build a fence around Canada, with trade patterns as they exist in this day and age. That is not possible, but we could have a constructive policy, and we could have an idea of where we are going. At a point in time when we are saying to the western farmer, "You cannot seed 29 million acres of

wheat each year, or 24 million acres of wheat each year, or even possibly 20 million acres of wheat each year," we have looked with approval upon an increase in the importation of meat products into Canada. Those who are familiar with the economy of western Canada know that beef and pork, especially beef, can provide an alternative use for the land which farmers are advised must be removed from wheat.

We are advised by the task force that what acreage must be reduced. The government has instituted a very severe program to reduce the wheat acreage in the west. At the same time, the task force has advised the dairy farmer in eastern Canada, in certain instances, to move from dairy production into beef production. We know that there are two markets for Canadian red meats. One of those markets is in Canada, and the other is in the United States. These are the only two markets upon which we can depend. The United States is the export market which we can penetrate, but we do not advance our farmers' cause if we permit, and even more than that encourage, importation of red meats into our domestic market, then send some of those exports into the United States. This may eventually cause some restrictions to be placed on our export of red meats to the U.S. market.

It is about time we had a more clear definition of Canada's policy on this aspect of trade, as well as on other aspects. But at the same time, and to the credit of the government, we know they are providing credit facilities in an effort to find increasing markets for our grain and wheat. Again to the government's credit, they have negotiated toward a better tariff structure with Japan so that we can move more effectively into that market with our grain. Mr. Speaker, let us put together a more complete policy covering the whole picture, so that the farmer may have some confidence as to what his objective may be, what he may aim for, and where he may safely invest money which he has to borrow at high interest rates. Let us give the farmer a clear idea of the markets available to him.

Compare this policy which I have just described with the policy which is applied to the automobile industry, and it can be seen that there is quite a contrast. In the one, we have a trade policy which permits those who are investing to have a good idea of the market potential which has been reached by agreement between countries. As a result of

[Mr. Gleave.]