

Economic Conditions in Rural Communities

of a boxcar from another, and it was taken away from him. I am sure it was offered to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) but he would not touch it with a 10-foot pole because he wanted to stay elected. He neither wants nor needs the Canadian Wheat Board under his jurisdiction. In fact, he needs it like a hole in the head. The hon. member for Saskatoon-Humboldt (Mr. Lang) got the job, but he is the minister in charge of manpower and immigration and the Canadian Wheat Board is still treated as a sideline. That is all it has been in the eyes of this government every since it was elected. The hon. member for Assiniboia believes that if farmers were assured of markets they would grow grain. That was a brilliant statement, but he forgot to tell us about the International Grains Arrangement negotiations which collapsed last week. The government of Canada refused to place its power behind the farmers of Canada and consistently has refused to do so since the days of the International Wheat Agreement and since the first International Grains Arrangement was agreed to. No other country in the world apart from Canada refuses to support and back up their grain producers—no other government except the government of Canada be it Liberal or Tory.

Mr. Speaker, the negotiators on behalf of Canada at the International Grains Arrangement talks at Geneva were betrayed by their own government. Their own government refused to put behind the negotiators the strength and wealth of this nation. If some of our competitors in the grains industry wish to play unfair pool, Canada has some cards to play—but Canada refuses to play them. Farmers, in this instance grain farmers, have been betrayed again. The proposals the minister has placed before us now and the policies followed by the government have perpetrated what has been going on in Canada for 25 years.

I am not trying to be sentimental about this. The quarter section and half section farms in my riding are very efficient and some have survived better than have some of the one or two section farms, but the elimination of tens of thousands of family farms and farm families, whichever way you wish to put it, has forced thousands of people into the cities of Canada and has cost our nation much more than it would have cost to permit these people to operate a farm which would be economical and viable and make it possible for them to maintain a decent standard of living.

No one has ever counted the cost on the other side of the coin. All the major cities of Canada, if not another soul moved into them, would need ten years to catch up with the problems they have now in respect of urban pollution, housing, education and everything else. Yet we keep forcing more people into these cities. We can think of the towns and villages in rural Canada which have streets, sidewalks, water systems, electrification systems, curling rinks, community halls, and so on, and yet this government asks these people to walk away from them. This is how the government is dividing us. The proposals which are put forward are not worth the paper they are written on. I believe the motion is a perfectly valid one

[Mr. Benjamin.]

which deserves the support of members on all sides of this House who come from rural Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Herb Breau (Gloucester): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on this opposition motion because it is about the economy, unemployment, the exodus from rural regions of Canada, and the problems involved. That is very close to me because I represent a completely rural riding.

I listened to some of the speeches delivered today; more particularly, I listened attentively to the hon. members of the opposition, and I expected to find good ideas, ideas that would help solve the problems. But as always, there was nothing too stirring in their remarks, whether they were about the economy or regional development.

The hon. member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Skoberg) does not have to worry, because I have a little more respect for the backbenchers of the New Democratic Party and the Ralliement Crétitiste than I do for the members of the official opposition. At least, what they say, they say it with conviction, whereas there is confusion amongst the members of the official opposition, unless they deliberately want to mislead the Canadian people.

Indeed, the opposition objects to every budget intended to bring unemployment to heel, to nurse back to health the economy. They constantly preach that the present economic unrest is solely due to the government, that it is alone responsible for it and that it is to blame for regional disparities.

Yet it is very clear—and any economist will agree on that score—that what normally follows a period of steady growth, in any country whose economic system resembles ours, is a period of inflation and slower economic growth, rather than a recession. Now when I say that I have a little more respect for NDP members it is because some of them—and Crétitistes—advocate a socialist doctrine. They claim they would have a closer control over economic growth from year to year and would curtail unemployment. Yet, the leaders of those parties—I say leaders because now they have one, two or perhaps three—are afraid to talk about socialism, because they want to be re-elected in the next election.

I understand why the NDP leader, his assistant and their financial critic do not want to admit they are socialists; they simply want to garner votes. They know quite well that socialist principles would not be accepted and while I do not agree with them, I respect their views. I respect the view according to which in a socialist system, the economy could be better controlled. However, our country cannot adjust itself to such a system. In any case, those arguments could be raised in another debate.

The official opposition, through the member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath), tried to blame the government for the depression. He was pleased to note that there were no Cabinet member in the House this evening. Now, if the ministers wasted their time to listen to such statements, the country would be in danger.

Inflation and unemployment do not only exist in Canada. The rate of increase of the national gross prod-