

Agricultural Policies

• (3:40 p.m.)

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It is a well-known rule in this House that when we are engaged in one debate we are not permitted to take part in another debate. Bill C-197 is not before us now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): I agree with the hon. member.

Mr. Olson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, the motion before the House clearly sets out the idea that hon. members question government policy in this field. Bill C-197 is part of that policy and certainly comes within the ambit of the language of the motion.

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what I was about to say in referring to Bill C-197, which is part of government policy.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The minister's remarks would still be out of order.

Mr. Lang: Hon. members opposite have raised the point as to where responsibility lies for the fact that this bill is not moving forward. Reference was made by hon. members opposite to the opinions of farmers on this issue. I wish to refer to this statement by the Saskatchewan Federation of Agriculture of May 12, which says:

We are extremely disappointed that the opposition has moved an amendment to Bill C-197 asking for the establishment of an agency only upon a successful national plebiscite and election of agency members.

We believe such a move is not at all consistent with their respective party policies of developing a national agricultural policy for Canada.

They go on to ask, "Why do you not allow the bill to go to committee, where it can receive study clause by clause and where representations may be made?"

Mr. Aiken: Will the minister permit a question?

Mr. Lang: After I have finished, if the hon. member does not mind.

Mr. Danforth: The minister will be finished shortly.

Mr. Aiken: I shall certainly ask a question then.

Mr. Lang: When the opposition moves a motion such as the one before us, it is of course showing that it is unwilling to look at the positive things the government is doing in

terms of coming to grips with the agricultural problems of this country. I must say that the final words of the motion, that the government ought to "take positive measures to ensure a dynamic rural community as an essential component of Canadian society," are words that we agree with completely because they are basic to our whole policy in this area.

Hon. members opposite, however, insist on ignoring the many things we have done and are doing in our attempt to produce a dynamic agricultural society in this country. We are taking action on almost every front, and hon. members opposite know it. Recently, on another occasion I indicated the things which are being done from a financial point of view to assist the Canadian agricultural community at this time.

Reference was made by the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Douglas) to cash advances. The interest on those will cost the treasury of this country \$12 million this year. The Temporary Wheat Reserves Act, brought in by a Liberal government will be costing the treasury the estimated \$72 million to be spent in assistance to the agricultural industry. The food aid program, which the present government has significantly increased as compared with the program of the previous period, will amount to nearly \$70 million worth of wheat and flour. The recent sale of about 22 million bushels to India is an example of what this program means in terms of moving our farmers' grain to markets abroad.

Also, within the last year and a half, annual additional credit facilities have been made available for the expanded marketing of Canadian grain. An item of \$12 million appears in the estimates of the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce to allow for an aggressive grain sales approach by the Canadian Wheat Board. As a result of this, sales recently have been made to Peru, Syria, the United Arab Republic and, most recently, to Brazil. This will clearly and definitely assist in moving Canadian wheat and grain to markets. The movement of grain from the prairie regions will be at near record levels in the next several months and wheat and barley will be moving in record proportions. The movement of rapeseed and flaxseed has been very good throughout the year. The movement of rapeseed will reach new record levels.

This does not mean, of course, that the cash position of farmers has been put right or that