

Agriculture

Many of these problems would not have developed in the first place if federal governments over the last 15 years had developed stable floor prices for farm products based on the costs of production. This is something that successive Liberal and Conservative governments have failed to do—and this has been the cry of the west for years. Now Canadian consumers are being pinched and squeezed because of high food prices due to the total failure of previous governments to stabilize the agricultural economy.

In the province of Saskatchewan thousands of farmers have left farms because that supposedly would make the remainder more efficient. Many farmers got by, by the skin of their teeth. Now, when things are looking better, everyone is screaming that the farmer is getting too much—

Mr. Whelan: Not everybody.

Mr. Nesdoly: —when in effect he is getting only what is due to him.

In the province of Saskatchewan, on October 15 a floor price was announced for hogs. This was done to encourage farmers to stay in hog production. Studies indicated that it cost approximately \$48 to \$50 to produce one hog. Therefore, the government of Saskatchewan said, "All right; we will give you a floor price of \$52 a hog plus a \$5 incentive to stay in hog production." The result is that the farmers have a floor price of \$57 per hundredweight on hogs at the present time. This will exist for a three-month period and then it will be reviewed and probably renewed for two further three-month periods until July 15 next. Hopefully, by that time the federal government will waken up and negotiate some sort of a stable floor price for hogs. This is essential if farmers are to stay in hog production. Certainly the federal government should be moving into this scheme because I do not think the people of Saskatchewan should be subsidizing hog prices for all of Canada. And, Mr. Speaker, we export 80 per cent of our hogs.

The hog population in Saskatchewan has dropped slightly and people are saying it is because of the hog marketing commission that we have in the province. The Tories in Saskatchewan are trying to destroy it. I would like to point out to you, Mr. Speaker, that for the period ending October 1, according to the Dominion Bureau of Statistics the number of hogs dropped by 4.4 per cent in Saskatchewan, compared with a drop of more than 10 per cent in Alberta where they do not have the type of marketing board that we have.

Another related matter, so far as the agricultural industry in the west is concerned, is the whole question of administration of agricultural policies. We have a minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, we have a Minister of Agriculture, and in Saskatchewan the federal community pastures come under the Department of Regional Economic Expansion. This divergence of the various ministries causes problems so that the right hand does not know what the left hand is doing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I regret very much interrupting the hon. member, but the time allotted to him under the agreement made earlier today has expired.

[Mr. Nesdoly.]

Mr. G. H. Whittaker (Okanagan Boundary): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I enter this debate to support the motion on agriculture. I would like to begin by quoting an editorial in *The Grower*, which is published monthly by the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association. It is headed, "Farm policy a tragic farce," and among other things it says:

The currently higher farm commodity prices . . . could mask the fact that Canada still does not have cohesive farm policy . . . none of the several departments concerned had studied the implications of sweeping tariff reductions.

Canadian beef and pork producers have been kept on a yo-yo since last February.

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Well did the fruit and vegetable growers of Canada know what this means, because they have been kept on a yo-yo for many years because of lack of a farm policy. The soybean market was wrecked and the report from the Department of Agriculture is that farmers have been discouraged from expanding production. An important fact concerning agricultural policy is the federally-divided responsibility for agriculture: Canada has an emasculated Department of Agriculture.

This afternoon the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) was complaining that some people were worried about the number of speeches that he makes. I am not worried about the number, but I get a profusion of these speeches sent to my office and it is the content that I complain about. I do not even have to read them any more; I can just scan them because they are all the same. After reading these speeches over the last few months, it appears that the minister has traded his pitchfork for a trident and is about to grow a beard so that he can keep permanently in place the halo that he thinks is over his head. In most of his speeches he takes credit for what has happened in agriculture in the past few months, which has come about more by accident than by design; there is very little there about the policies of his government.

Why does he not tell the farmers what he is doing to help them in transportation and marketing? What about feed assistance for the people in southern British Columbia where there was a very severe drought this year? With feed assistance for their cattle they could maintain their basic herds. What about the cold storage subsidy? We have heard little about that. What about the livestock inventory provision of the Income Tax Act? What about the tender fruit industry study? We hear very little about these things, Mr. Speaker. I should like to deal with some of these policy matters, but as my time is short I will not be able to cover them all.

This afternoon the minister was going to tell the House about policy, but he got hung up on farm credit. Marketing is the thing, Mr. Speaker. What is the use of setting up credit for farmers, or even giving them money to get into farming, if they cannot market their produce? Marketing is what they need; they have to earn their living in the marketplace. Why does the minister not tell us what he is doing to give the Canadian producer a market in Canada and to help him market abroad? In a speech in the House earlier this year the minister said that no one would bring products into Canada and upset the market of Canadian producers. Is this what he means? How about what hap-