

● (4:00 p.m.)

Improved credit facilities are not enough when we consider the real necessity, which is a higher price for the product. I attended meetings this past weekend in my constituency. When talking to farmers, machinery dealers and a cross-section of people from rural areas it was never so evident to me that time is running out for these people. They have extended their credit as far as they can. Their resources are stretched tight. They have borrowed as much money as possible from the banks. This is very evident from their arrears with the Farm Credit Corporation, which are well over the 20 per cent mark. Everywhere credit facilities are stretched to the wire.

Further cash advances and credit extensions will not be of value much longer. We are coming to the end of the rope and approaching the day of reckoning in the farm community. It is folly to say that any measures before the House will alleviate this situation. The government, through the FCC, banks, farm agencies and other organizations will not help the owners of a great many farm enterprises in the near future. There has not been any legislation before the House this session to alleviate the situation. We have been debating this bill for only one day, but we spent more than a year on the farm products marketing bill. There is not anything in that bill which spells out that producers will receive even one cent more for their products. If we look at the bill we can only assume that the administrative costs of the bureaucracy may be an additional charge on this product. The charge will probably be on the producer rather than the consumer.

I urge the minister to look at this situation where credit has run out across the country. Many people have gone broke already. I can stand here and say these things. Maybe it will sound like politics, maybe it will not. However, if we talk to the people in the farm communities they will tell us that they can only go for another six months, the banks are closing down on them and they are in arrears with the FCC. When we hear this, we know that we are coming to the end of the road as far as agriculture is concerned.

During the past weekend the National Farmers Union staged demonstrations in Edmonton, Regina and, I think, Winnipeg. A few years ago I did not go along with demonstrations. I do not really believe in government by demonstration, but when I look at the demonstrations staged today I think the situation is entirely different. The government has not shown any awareness of the problem. It has not responded to mere words and warnings. It has continued its course of grinding-out legislation but this has not improved the farm picture. I say to the minister that one day the farmers of this nation will rise in anger and fall upon him. Unless he does more than he has in the past, he will deserve anything that happens. We cannot be responsible for their actions because their farms, businesses, life savings and dreams are disappearing. We in this Parliament merely talk about it and extend them a little more credit when they have already gone over the wire in that area. It is just like applying a band-aid to an amputated leg.

Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act

Some figures were quoted in this debate yesterday which indicated the amount of money funnelled into agriculture by governments of various countries. It was pointed out that Canada is spending approximately \$350 on each person employed in agriculture. I gather that the figures quoted were for the year 1968. At the same time, the small country of Switzerland was spending approximately \$1,502 on each person employed in agriculture. A little country like Switzerland funnels over \$1,500 per person into agriculture, while Canada is only funneling about \$350. Compare the performance of these two nations over the years. Switzerland has continued right in the middle of a hornet's nest. Governments have fallen, governments have gone bankrupt, there have been wars and strife and yet Switzerland has remained stable. These figures indicate that the Swiss have read their history books and realize the importance of agriculture to a nation that hopes to survive.

It may be said that the main business in Switzerland is banking and that agriculture is not very important when looked at from an objective point of view from our distance from them. However, they feel it is important enough to funnel almost five times as much per person into agriculture every year as we in Canada—and Switzerland is not a forming nation; that is not their main business. If one looks at the relative importance of the gross national product of agriculture in Canada compared with that of Switzerland, he can see what I mean. It can be seen that they have read their history books well. They realize that any country or civilization must have a healthy agricultural economy in order to survive. Countries which have chosen to ignore this fact have disappeared into the dust, and the sands of time have swept over them. If the minister has put any effort into this matter, I feel he must put in three times as much effort. This country will rise or fall on the basis of our agriculture. Our farmers do not have much time left.

The hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) quoted some very interesting figures from the Wheat Board's report. They show the difference between announced and actual sales, and the amount of sales that are uncommitted in contracts which we have with other countries. I was shocked when I heard these figures. The minister has made announcements in the House about the great grain sales that have been made to the Arab Republic and to Russia, yet according to the hon. member for Vegreville only a small percentage of the grain has been delivered. What these sales really amounted to was an open-ended contract with these countries. If these countries could buy their grain cheaper elsewhere, they shopped around and did so, whereas we were tied to the arrangement we had made.

● (4:10 p.m.)

Mr. Lang: Could I ask the hon. member a question?

Mr. Downey: I would be very pleased to receive one.

Mr. Lang: I should like to ask the hon. member whether he would care to read the pages of the Wheat Board report referred to by his colleague. Perhaps he will