

Canadian pork made up about 2 per cent of the American market. The Americans moved very quickly with a countervail and cut us off. They have much faster, better and more efficient mechanisms for cutting off trade than we have.

● (1510)

As to the second question about trade agreements which tend to tie us to one country "*à la* R. B. Bennett", as the Hon. Member said, there are some parallels. R. B. Bennett wanted a similar agreement with the British in the 1930s. The British did not seem to be very interested, but he kept pursuing it pretty well throughout his mandate. The Government has decided that the object of its affection will be Ronald Reagan and the Americans. Ronald Reagan may be willing, but the American Congress does not seem to be terribly willing. As the Minister explained, we will probably see Canada going to these discussions, if they in fact amount to something. However, rather than tying ourselves to a firm bilateral agreement with exclusivity clauses, we would be much better off going the GATT route, keeping our options open and selling to a wide range of countries. We know from past experience that countries which appear to be good markets dry up. For example, the British seemed to be the main market of the 1930s, and they buy virtually no agricultural products from us now. In fact, they have become our competitors. Tying ourselves to one market is not the answer; keeping our options open is much better.

**Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma):** Mr. Speaker, the motion before the House today in the name of the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner) reads as follows:

That this House regrets that the Government has refused to recognize the serious crisis facing the farm family in Canada and condemns the Government for its inadequate response to the problems of Canadian farmers, including a severe cost-price squeeze and debt burden, fierce predatory international competition and natural disasters, which have combined to place Canada's agricultural community in jeopardy.

He placed this motion before the House on our first Opposition Day because we are very concerned with the serious crisis facing Canadian agriculture.

We only have to look at the most recent report of the Farm Credit Corporation which suggested that 23 per cent of Canadian farmers are in serious financial difficulty. That is a frightening statistic. We only have about 170,000 farmers, and some 39,000 or 23 per cent of them are in serious financial difficulty. Another 11 per cent are in moderate to severe financial difficulty. If we look at that group of 39,000 farmers, we see that they spend an average of 10 years to 12 years in agriculture. They are really our youngest farmers, but they are also our most technologically advanced. They are our most efficient producers and our most productive farmers and, according to the statistics of the FCC, produce about half the food in Canada. They have a debt burden of something like \$17 billion. The possibility of these young farmers losing their farms is frightening, disturbing and concerning. Will they be unable to survive? Will they be unable to have the opportunity to live a good life on the farm and to make a tremendous contribution to our country and to our export sales in years to

### Supply

come? Also it is very disturbing, as we look at the agricultural economies of Canada and of the world, to see the prices of commodities, the price prospects for grain and the prospects for cash crops. For example, we see farmers in southwestern Ontario growing soybeans and corn. They will not even get back their cost of production unless the Government provides stabilization. If we look at the long-term prospects for red meat, hogs and pork, it is a very disturbing situation which requires the resolve and determination of every Member of the House of Commons, especially those in the Government. It has to be placed on a higher plane of commitment or given a higher priority.

If we look at the international climate for farm commodity prices and at what is going on in the world at large, we see large trading blocs like the United States with huge, massive surpluses. They are able to commit \$2 billion worth of grain for a bonus program. They are able to demand and receive a larger share of world markets. We want to know whether the Government is prepared to hang with our farmers and see them survive in the fierce, predatory international climate of commodity pricing.

If we look at the EEC, several years ago it was a customer for 25 million tons of wheat. Today it markets about that much on the world scene and subsidizes sales abroad. To round out the fierce competition in international trade, we have only to look at the 23.5 million pounds of EEC beef, subsidized up to 48 cents per pound, which is coming into Canada this year, or at the hog countervail by the United States of 5.3 cents per pound which will be harmful to our hog producers. We should compare those aspects with the almost blasé, *laissez-faire*, easy-going attitude of the Government that it will consider it, that it is sympathetic, but that it has not got around to making any decision or taking any action. These are the things which concern us in the Opposition and concern farmers right across the country.

Another reason for the motion being before the House at the present time is that the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition is a man of his word. In September, he had an opportunity to visit the drought areas of southern Saskatchewan, to meet with community leaders there and to view the devastation due to the drought. In July, I had an opportunity to visit some farms in that area, to talk with many producers and to see the devastation as well. I saw hundreds of acres with no crops. After having an opportunity to meet with community leaders and producers, my Leader suggested to the Government a number of worth-while initiatives which it could take. Although the Minister spoke eloquently this afternoon, we are concerned that he was unable to respond to many of the recommendations of our Leader. Since I was in Saskatchewan, in the prairie areas, since the Leader of the Opposition was there and made these recommendations, people want to know whether the Government will respond to these suggestions. I will mention some of them in detail in a few moments.