

*Agricultural Policies*

tions were issued on June 4 under which the letter was given a different interpretation. Of course, the farmers concerned have no possible way of paying back their cash advances, in view of the amount of grain they were able to deliver.

The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) recited a long list of things his department had done for the benefit of agriculture. Fair and good. They cannot be losers all the time. Nevertheless, other policies could have been followed in an attempt to bring hope to farmers now faced with acute financial difficulties. On May 13 a letter was addressed to me by the minister with regard to the Lift program in which he said that the program was designed to improve the cash flow to farmers with grain on hand. There are many farmers in the west who do not have grain on hand. The department's letter is an example of the attempt to divide and conquer the rural community of this nation. We are all well aware that agricultural rural areas throughout the nation are in dire need of cash. Nothing has been done under present legislation to make money available to producers, to keep the communities in which they live viable.

The minister tried to suggest that we on this side would reverse the trend which the government has introduced over dozens of years. But the motion is clear. It refers only to those policies which have deliberately depressed the agricultural economy—the policies which have caused severe unemployment and lack of income resulting in slow economic growth and little hope for the future of any engaged in the industry.

What of the report of the task force which has been filed in this House? A task force was set up in France recently to report on the state of agriculture in that country. But at least it considered the problems of the industry in a positive way, realizing what a great contribution agriculture was making to the good of the nation. This is not true of the task force report which has been filed here. It states that farm policies should be oriented to the efficient producer and suggests that the federal Department of Agriculture be renamed the Department of Agricultural Industry. Big deal. It looks as though some of these people had no real contribution to make to the work of the commission so they proposed renaming the department, believing this would solve the problems to be encountered.

The report also says programs are needed to stimulate demand in markets and potential

markets. We in this group have stated many times that we have complete confidence in the Wheat Board but that the Board must be given the tools with which to do its job. Canada cannot expect to produce a good sales record consistently unless we establish trade missions abroad. Instead of resting on its laurels and on its past successes, the government should set up trade missions in foreign countries so that we may sell our products more easily. The returns will flow back to the producers.

The report also said that subsidies and price supports had failed to help farmers to become more viable and should be dropped as soon as possible. Mr. Speaker, anyone who has done any reading on this subject knows that Canada is the only grain exporting nation which does not look after its producers—the only grain exporting nation which expects its producers to subsidize the treasuries of other nations. The Minister without Portfolio must be well aware of this, but he has not suggested that a basic price should be established for grain sold domestically. Even though 25 per cent is about the maximum amount used domestically, the fact remains that the domestic price could be raised without undue harm being done to the economy.

The task force further recommended that young farmers who lacked the potential to become viable operators should be moved out of the industry through welfare programs, retraining and the provision of jobs in other sectors of the economy. The young farmers in this nation today are the very ones who have attended university in many cases. They have attended agricultural courses. They are the very people who will be taking over the reins of production. Yet here we find a proposal that many of them should be moved from the farms to the metropolitan areas where they will encounter poverty and a polluted environment.

• (3:00 p.m.)

I suggest that if this government does not intend to divide and conquer the agricultural economy it should look at the rural areas and realize that any report which suggests that we should break down the rural centres is performing a disservice to the nation. Another task force report recommends, for the farmers that remain, that there should be the provision of money to stimulate management training, sophisticated information processing systems, market and price forecasts and similar management tools.