

● (2040)

In order that everyone will be fully aware of what the minister intends to do prior to the western economic conference, the minister owes it to the provincial governments, federal members, farmers and farm representatives, whether they be farm leaders or members of parliament, to enlighten this House tonight. He does not have to be exact. He can do what the minister in charge of energy suggested, but in less than 700 pages, I hope. He can outline the problem and tell us whether he intends to do A, B or C. Is the minister going to free the borders so that a person can go anywhere in western Canada and buy barley and oats at the same price as a neighbouring farmer? Is he going to allow the Winnipeg grain exchange to set the price? Is there going to be a floor price? Is the initial price going to mean anything? These are the questions that confront the farmers and their representatives as August 1 approaches. The answer is difficult, but not beyond solution.

The minister has a golden opportunity to enlarge the feed grains market for Canadian producers in order to make it more competitive with American corn. He also has a golden opportunity to strengthen the hand of the Wheat Board and bring about a better situation whereby Canadians marketing grain will know exactly the inventory on the farms and in commercial storage.

The minister has dedicated himself to removing grain from commercial storage. He has reduced the wheat supply to 178 million bushels. He is dedicated to saving the federal government money. I can only conclude that, in this new feed grains policy, that thought will again be uppermost in his mind. If one tended to believe that thinking, one would believe he is in essence throwing the farmers of western Canada into the open market in connection with the marketing of their grain domestically. I do not believe that is necessary or that it should happen.

Some changes should be made along the lines I suggested earlier, namely strengthening the Wheat Board, allowing for better pricing, and enlarging the marketing system in Canada with regard to western grown feed grains as well as providing information with regard to the amount of inventory on hand. In this crop year the minister asked that 16 million acres of barley be seeded. Only 11 million were seeded. There were 25 million acres of summer fallow. Why was there not more? The farmers did not have confidence in the minister's judgment. If this debate does not do anything more than bring the minister out clean on this, it will be of benefit to the farmers of western Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, I am happy that we again have the opportunity to discuss the serious problems now being faced by the oldest, most worthy and most important industry in our country, namely agriculture. In spite of the opinion of certain very learned economists, I am convinced that the farming industry should continue to exist and I sincerely believe that we should put all our efforts into developing and improving it, so that we can supply humanity with the agricultural products and the foods it needs.

We all know that the Canadian farmer is now fighting harder and harder to survive, both in eastern and in

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western Canada. In fact, the Canadian farmer is having much too hard a time. Two of these problems being faced in the agricultural sector have been raised tonight, and they are the importation of certain products essential to the Canadian meat and poultry industry, and the problem of feed grain.

The latter in creating very serious difficulties for farmers, particularly in eastern Canada and in British Columbia. If they are to be solved, the government must take on its responsibilities, it must decide to act, so that a just solution can be found, one that will benefit not just one special part of the country, but the nation as a whole.

In the month of June we attended a meeting in Drummondville, at which discussion centred on the feed grain policy to be announced by the government, we are told, in early August. I am still confident that the government will announce a read policy, aimed, not at dividing the country further, but at fostering greater understanding between all Canadians and at creating equal opportunities for eastern and western farmers.

The control that the United States recently imposed on exports of some products which we absolutely need gives rise to some difficulties. And we, in turn, also answered by an embargo on exports of goods essential to production, and by requiring exporters to obtain a permit to export specific kinds of products which the United States also need.

Therefore, economists who work for the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) and the federal government have, in my opinion, failed in their duty. They failed in an unbelievable way. We only have to examine all the problems facing us, which remain unsolved, after applying their recommendations and following their recipes, to realize it.

When a cook prepares any kind of paste by following a recipe, it is in the purpose of making a tempting meal but if, when following this recipe, she realizes that she failed, she will be wiser next time and hesitate a long time before following the recipe of these so-called experts who know everything and pretend to be in a position to solve problems.

Economists who work for the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) have not proved to be any better. They have not succeeded yet in finding a financial formula to secure for every Canadian a minimum income, a decent livelihood. It is an approximation, a rehased job, those are experiments which cost a lot to taxpayers, while the results are slow in coming.

Mr. Speaker, I recall that in March 1972, the present Minister of Agriculture, in the Standing Committee on Agriculture, had made a very right comment, and I am convinced that he had thought about his remark before making it, because he was examining, with other committee members, the estimates of the Department of Agriculture and of various services. This is what the minister who was then member of parliament said, and I quote:

Referring again to the statements of the deputy minister concerning economists, all I have to do, Mr. Chairman, is to check what they did and see in what sad shape they have put agriculture in the last ten years since I have been a member. Some ridiculous decisions have cost agriculture and the farmers in my area millions of dollars.