

Grain—Deficiency Payments

The only other thing that I would like to say is that there are some areas of western Canada, part of my constituency, part of the constituency represented by the hon. member for Humboldt-Melfort (Mr. Rapp), part of the constituency of Mackenzie (Mr. Korchinski) and part of the constituency represented by the Prime Minister (Mr. Diefenbaker) where the cost of labour is even greater because it requires more than one man to take care of 400 acres of a grain farm.

It is a generally accepted fact in western Canada, and I think almost any banker will confirm it, that many of the farmers have been living on their machinery depreciation during the last several years and if they were to go out today they would not be able to buy new equipment because they have spent the money in those years on family living costs. That is one of the reasons why industrial plants in eastern Canada have been shut. That is one of the reasons why men and women are idle in Canada today. For 12 years the best customers of the people in industrial Canada have been starved for income and as a result we are faced today with an unemployment situation such as the country has not seen for many years. During those 12 years the Liberal party, in power with majorities that compelled responsibility, failed time and time again to take appropriate action. Year by year marginal surpluses built up until they became unmanageable and the country found itself in real trouble.

An hon. Member: What are you doing about it?

Mr. Nasserden: You just cannot go out and sell a 12 year surplus at the drop of a hat. We on the government side who represent those who produce grain in western Canada know that the farmers are not asking for a handout. We have not seriously questioned the subsidies given other segments of the economy. We have not risen in our places to challenge the tariff policy which has been built up over a long period of years by other governments and parties until today it has become an integral part of the economy of the country. We are prepared to accept the voices of the representatives of other constituencies as the voices of the people of those constituencies. All we ask in return is that those who have come to the House of Commons from other parts of Canada give equal recognition to the rights and needs of the people who inhabit the three prairie provinces which have become known as the grain bin of an empire.

[Mr. Nasserden.]

I have devoted more time to this particular matter than was my wish but since coming here I have been astounded by the fears rampant in Ontario townships and some parts of Quebec and the maritimes as to what may happen if western Canadian farmers turn in earnest to the production of those commodities that the farmers of the east have felt for so many years they had the sole right to produce. My only comment in that regard is the same as the one I made a few minutes ago with respect to hogs, that there is a trend today that far surpasses anything anyone in the house imagines if the remarks I have heard during the time I have been here are indicative of what is taking place in western Canada.

There is a great deal that can be said for deficiency payments, and I think everyone in this house, regardless of party, recognizes that the farmers of western Canada have laboured under a handicap not only for the last year or 18 months but for the last several years. I do not need to remind hon. members of what took place during the war years and what it cost western Canadian producers of cereal grains to be a patriotic part of the Canadian war effort. I believe, as the leader and members of our party believe, that the solution of this problem is the adoption of a national agricultural policy, a policy that will enable farmers in all parts of the country to realize that they do not have to come cap in hand to the government year by year asking for another morsel, whether you call that morsel deficiency payments or something else.

The other day in the house the leader of the C.C.F. intimated that if deficiency payments were not paid the Conservative party would forfeit much of the good will it has in western Canada. I say to him and to others of like mind that the making of deficiency payments alone is not the total answer to the plight of the western grain grower. We want a national policy that will continue from year to year so that the farmers of western Canada will be able to take pride in the fact that they are playing an equal part in the economic development of this great nation.

I can understand the anxiety that is felt in many parts of western Canada when the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Argue) goes back west and says that the Conservative government will do nothing for the farmers. All I want to say is that those who do that, and it has been done for many years now, are more responsible than anyone else for the measure of hostility that I seem to sense even on the streets of Ottawa when the word "wheat" is mentioned. In the ordinary course of events it will take years for the Conservative members who have been sent to the House of Commons to overcome that measure