

• (12 noon)

He said: Mr. Speaker, we have placed this motion before the House at this time because my party believes that it is essential to take careful stock of government agricultural policies which are developing clearly in the direction of depopulating Canadian rural communities within the next number of years. We have placed it on the order paper, Mr. Speaker, because we believe that this policy carries with it fateful consequences not only for the entire farming population of Canada but also for all of Canadian society. I also believe, and I say this frankly, Mr. Speaker, that the discussion of this subject and a vote on the motion may be necessary at this time because of the provincial election in the province of Saskatchewan. The electors in that province have the right to know clearly where each of the parties in this House stands on the issue raised in the motion I have had the honour of moving.

The subject placed before the House is also urgent for another reason. It is urgent because of the financial crisis in which western farmers now find themselves, and there is an urgent need for an immediate injection of large amounts of cash into the prairie grain economy.

As hon. members know, farm organizations such as the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, the National Farmers Union and other spokesmen for the farmers have insisted that the minimum amount required to enable western grain growers to get out of their financial difficulties is at least \$250 million. My reading of the statistics relating to the plight of western farmers suggests, even though I do not claim to be a farm expert, that the demand for a \$250 million injection is fully justified. In my motion I have limited the amount to \$100 million because that seems to be the amount which the government is ready to make available to western grain farmers. It is ready to make that amount available, however, only through a form of blackmail directed at the western farmer and western farm organizations. The government has attached this pay-out of \$100 million to another kind of policy, its policy, so-called, of stabilizing the farming industry. That is a policy which farmers oppose and the details of which as presented by the government every farm organization opposes.

I make no bones about the fact that this motion is related to the provincial election in Saskatchewan. I say that before someone else says it. It is necessary for hon. members to see whether the Liberal members of this House are prepared to vote for or are determined to vote against the demand that \$100 million be paid out immediately, without condition and without the loss of any other farm assistance programs.

I have studied over the last little while, and since assuming my new responsibilities in my party I have done it to a greater extent than I did before, the various aspects of farm policy and the suggestions for agricultural policy that have been made to the country in the last few years. If you put together the Lift program of last year, the report of the task force on agriculture, some statements made by the minister in charge of the Wheat Board and other statements issued by the Department of

Suggested Payment to Western Farmers

Agriculture and spokesmen for the minister in charge of the Wheat Board, as well as the legislation presently before the House, it seems to me that you can clearly discern a complex and composite of policies which are deliberately designed to induce farmers to leave their land, to hasten the demise of the independent Canadian farmer, to make farming the preserve of powerful corporations—in short, to tear the very heart from western Canada and to chase farmers into overcrowded and polluted urban centres. This, to us, appears to be sheer madness and shows the typical attitude of this government to every aspect of our economy. It is an attitude that is concerned purely about statistics and figures of growth and which to a large extent ignores the human beings involved in the policy and in the economic area concerned.

When you look at statistics showing what has happened to western grain farmers in the last few years and note their starkness, you will see that they are truly distressing and shattering. Calculations have been made showing that in 1970 the total, net realized income from farming operations of more than 180,000 farmers across the Prairies was \$174 million, less than \$1,000 per farm. This is a decline of \$700 million from 1969 and of \$830 million from 1968.

The government of the province of Manitoba has calculated that the net, realized income from some 40,000 farms in the province was \$31 million in 1970, which represents a net income per farm in that area of only about \$800. Studies show that you must go back to the depression and drought year of 1936 to find comparable net farm incomes. That was the situation in what everyone agrees was a year of considerable growth, although accompanied by considerable unemployment in this country.

If you look at Saskatchewan, the same situation is revealed. The net realized income of all farmers in Saskatchewan, and there are about 75,000, was \$200 million in 1970. In the five years 1963 to 1967 that income averaged \$435 million. These figures were presented by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture in its brief to the government some time ago. In 1970, in other words, the net income of farmers was less than half their average income in the five-year period 1963 to 1967. The Canadian Federation of Agriculture added in its brief that if you deduct from this amount income in kind, which is included in the figures from which are calculated total income, the figure would change from \$368 million to \$131 million, and would become about one-third in 1970 of the average figure for the five years 1963-67.

The Canadian Federation of Agriculture went on to point out something we all know, that there is a considerable number of cattle-producing farms on the Prairies. The federation shows that if you allocate to livestock a quarter of the total of the net income, or \$92 million, over the five-year period 1963-67, and the federation presents evidence showing that that is not an unreasonable assumption, the net income left for grain growers in the five years 1963-67 averaged \$276 million. However, the figure relating to cattle raising and cattle producing on