

have become ghost towns and cities only slightly larger than that are dying on their feet.

The farmers of rural Canada have continually been told to rationalize, to be efficient and to diversify. There is not another industry that has become more efficient since the Second World War than the agricultural industry. The only one that comes even close to agriculture is the steel industry, though they lag some way behind even at that. So talk about farmers becoming more efficient is just talk.

So-called ex-agricultural experts and government spokesmen of whatever political stripe have been talking this way for the last 20 years. When they talk about efficiency, let me tell them that rural Canada has "efficiencied" itself to death. Not one other industry has kept pace with technological advances as has agriculture. Not one other industry has listened so closely to what experts have said about diversification. Agriculture has been through that mill more than once.

When the farmers were told to specialize, they specialized. When they specialized a little too well they were told to diversify. When they diversified too well they were told to specialize again. The farmers have been round and round the same circle several times since the Second World War. In 1946 there were 740,000 farm units in Canada. We are now down to 400,000. The proposals that the government are now putting forward mean that another 100,000 to 150,000 farmers have to go; they are given no choice. As a consequence, the felonies that we continue to perpetrate on the citizens of Canada are being compounded.

The minister in charge of the Wheat Board has presented proposals that I believe are designed to accomplish two things. First of all they are designed to reduce government involvement in agriculture. In other words, they are designed to save the government money, and the effect of these proposals will do exactly that. I submit that any amount that the government puts into the stabilization fund—if it puts any in at all—will amount to less than it would otherwise have had to pay under the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act.

The second purpose of the proposals is to eliminate small farms. This is more of the so-called rationalization of the agricultural industry. The proposals of the minister in charge of the Wheat Board take no account of farm costs or farm net income. It is a good, businesslike proposition in the sense that it evens out cash flow, but if the cash flow, be it even or uneven, is insufficient to allow farmers to survive, then the stabilization fund is not worth the paper it is written on. The minister's proposals fly in the face of any sensible, reasonable or civilized approach to the establishment of a stabilization fund. I submit they pervert the whole principle of a stabilization fund. Certainly they fly in the face of any concept of a guaranteed income or any concept that would stabilize not only farm income but rural communities in Canada.

Abolition of the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act means that the minister's proposal will cost the government nothing. The government is supporting the uranium industry to the tune of \$120 million. I do not oppose this;

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it means the preservation of the livelihoods of a lot of workers in many towns and communities. But if the preservation of this industry is valid and logical, surely it is equally or more valid and logical that the same thing be done for agriculture and that the whole nation share the cost of storing a reasonable amount of all six of the grains.

An hon. Member: But how much?

Mr. Benjamin: Any figure you like to mention. I suggest 100 million or 50 million bushels of each grain. All that is required is for the government to accept the concept of a national granary that will be supported by the nation as a whole. This would provide for a minimal amount of grain storage, if for no other reason than to fulfil sales commitments.

Earlier this evening the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Douglas) stated he believes that the stabilization plan is a good one and will be accepted by the farmers. I do not know what kind of farmers the hon. member has been talking to or from which country they come, but certainly I have not found any farmers in Canada who agree it is a good plan. Just prior to the supper recess members of our group met with a delegation from the Canadian Federation of Agriculture. Members opposite are also meeting with the same group at this moment. If Liberals can read—though I sometimes wonder—I do not know how the hon. member for Assiniboia is able to say that the stabilization plan is a good one. Let me put on *Hansard* what the Canadian Federation of Agriculture has to say about it:

But we must on this occasion stress as strongly as we can that the government grains receipts and stabilization proposals—which clearly will be on all our minds as we meet here today—do not represent an adequate undertaking by the federal government to assist and protect the position of prairie grain producers.

• (9:20 p.m.)

Surely, Mr. Speaker, nothing could be plainer than that. For the hon. member for Assiniboia to suggest that the plan is good and accepted by farmers is blatant nonsense which I cannot accept. Perhaps the only people who would accept it would be those who served coffee last weekend at meetings of the Regina Lake Centre-Assiniboia Liberal Associations. That is the only exception. No farm group supports or agree with the agricultural stabilization plan which the minister in charge of the Wheat Board proposes.

The hon. member for Assiniboia believes the minister in charge of the Wheat Board has been given exclusive responsibility for the Wheat Board. Boloney! He is the minister in charge of manpower and immigration. What is the Department of Manpower and Immigration for—laughs? When one looks at the unemployment rate, it is good for laughs and that is about all. It is also good for tears. But all the government's activities and programs in respect of grain in western Canada have been treated as nothing more than a sideline job by this government. The Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) had the job for a few months. He did not know one end