

do not doubt for one minute that the minister said, and I quote: "I won't stay as your Minister of Agriculture if there isn't something done that is practical and workable." I hope that is, as the minister often says, as clear as a bell. I do not doubt that, but why should someone like the Minister of Agriculture have to say that? Over the past nine years he has served the farming community quite well, in some instances. At this time when the farming community and the whole economy suffer because of the high interest rate policy of the government, why should someone like this minister have to leave the cabinet and the government he serves? We will have the answer on November 12. I very much hope the minister will not have to keep his word and resign because if that happens the producers of this country will be in worse shape than they are at present.

An hon. Member: You are being very kind.

Mr. McKnight: One of my colleagues says I am being very kind, but I do not think I am. The minister knows the respect he had in the farming community. He knows it has been eroded over the last two or three years. I am not saying that is the minister's fault, but he knows he has not been able to carry the ball for the farmers of Canada. I am not saying he is not trying. I am saying he does not have the ability to convince his colleagues; or perhaps his colleagues do not understand the problems.

Research and development are very important to the agricultural industry and to Canada as a whole. We in Canada spend 0.9 per cent of our gross national product on research in agriculture. The United States spends about 2.4 per cent. Sweden spends 1.9 per cent, and Japan spends 1.7 per cent. Because of a need to find a type of grain which will respond to bacteria to produce nitrogen—because nitrogen fertilizer costs close to \$300 a tonne—the Department of Agriculture funds a research program in Lethbridge. Bob Rennie's research program to inoculate wheat seeds with bacteria so that they are nitrogen-producing is funded by a budget of \$20,000. That is less than it cost three cabinet ministers to fly to Winnipeg last Saturday. The price of energy is rising—up to \$4 per gallon for diesel fuel—and the cost of nitrogen will increase because of the cost of natural gas. However, only \$20,000 is being put into a program which is so vital to the farmers of Canada.

At times we have had differences with the minister, but I must give him credit for one thing. I am sure this has been mentioned to him by some people in his department, but the minister has not yet introduced a program of state ownership for land. I would like to make it clear to the minister why he should not want a program like the one in Saskatchewan called Land Bank. I will give an example. A son rented his father's land from Land Bank after it was sold to them for \$120 an acre. Five years later the Land Bank offered to sell it back to the son at \$530 an acre. That kind and democratic socialist party which governs Saskatchewan made a profit of some 400 per cent.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. gentleman but his time has expired.

Agriculture

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[Translation]

QUESTIONS TO BE DEBATED

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please! It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 40, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: The hon. member for York-Sunbury (Mr. Howie)—VIA Rail—Elimination of Atlantic Limited train service. (b) Request that minister meet New Brunswick representatives; the hon. member for Mississauga South (Mr. Blenkarn)—Housing—Sale of houses held by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (b) Sales to investors and speculators; the hon. member for Winnipeg-Assiniboine (Mr. McKenzie)—VIA Rail—Effect of cutbacks on western economy.

● (1650)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S.O. 58—ALLEGED FAILURE TO SUPPORT FARMERS

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Mayer:

That this House, noting the disastrous increase in farm bankruptcies, condemns this government for its continuing failure to support Canada's farmers, and its inability to curtail the devastation high interest rates are bringing to Canada's agriculture section.

Mr. Marcel Ostiguy (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the two previous opposition speakers speak to the motion introduced by the member for Portage-Marquette (Mr. Mayer), which reads as follows:

That this House, noting the disastrous increase in farm bankruptcies, condemns this government for its continuing failure to support Canada's farmers, and its inability to curtail the devastation high interest rates are bringing to Canada's agriculture section.

Mr. Speaker, from this motion, moved by the hon. member for Portage-Marquette, it is clear that this opposition day will be used to discuss agriculture, a very appropriate subject for debate in this House in a country like ours. However, I feel that time is of the essence for this House, and the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) pointed this out just now when he said that a bill had already been tabled in this House in 1979, and that since then, there had been two elections, the business of the House had been delayed fairly regularly, and this particular bill, a bill to amend the Farm Credit Act, had not been able to materialize.