

Agriculture

of the things I was going to say about the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) would not be very complimentary, he still granted me five minutes. At any rate, I want to point out some of the shortcomings in the minister's speech.

I was appalled that the Minister of Agriculture would talk for 20 minutes, have extra time, yet not mention very much about interest rates, which are a major problem in this country. Nor did he mention anything about energy prices and the problems industry will have as a result of the 9-cent a gallon increase we had yesterday. He did not mention the problems associated with Bill C-57 which will produce increases in natural gas prices, resulting in increased fertilizer prices. The minister did not mention anything about what needs to be done with the western grain stabilization fund. I have written letters to the minister with suggestions to make it more effective. Those are just some of the things the minister could have talked about in terms of implementing programs to benefit agriculture. He did not talk about grain transportation.

We heard that great grain farmer who comes from Winnipeg, the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy), talk about the Russian grain sale involving 25 million tonnes over the next five years. Yet we see no policies coming forth from this government to ensure that we have a transportation system in place to meet our commitments to the Russians. That is a national priority. This sale will benefit the whole country in terms of our balance of payments, our interest rates and the value of our Canadian dollar.

We did not hear the Minister of Agriculture mention those things. Nor did he mention anything about transportation as it relates to livestock. We have major problems with the CNR and the CPR with regard to the moving of livestock in Canada. Representatives of both the CN and the CP have been before the Standing Committee on Transport. There seems to be no leadership nor movement on behalf of the CN or the government to see that we have cars for moving livestock.

I did not hear the minister mention anything about the Grain Transportation Authority in Winnipeg which was set up by the previous minister of transport. A co-ordinator was appointed but it took the previous minister roughly five months to do that. It has been eight months since the director, Dr. Hugh Horner, resigned last October, and this government has not been able to find a replacement in that period of time. I would have liked to see some reference to that as far as agriculture in western Canada is concerned.

The Agricultural Stabilization Act is certainly in need of some amendments and revamping to make it more useful. Many producers would like to see more of a participatory plan where producers and the government could contribute to make

it more meaningful when producers encounter problems in marketing.

The sheep industry in this country is in very bad shape. Literally we get clobbered when we get into the ethnic market. There are problems there. It is a small industry but an important one to the people involved. We did not hear the minister say anything about what he has done for the sheep industry. Nor did we hear anything about the Farm Credit Corporation.

There have been some interesting ideas expressed about how we could increase funding for the Farm Credit Corporation. As my colleague from the New Democratic Party, the hon. member for Selkirk-Interlake (Mr. Sargeant), mentioned, we could simply increase capitalization from the government. The head of the Farm Credit Corporation has suggested that it issue bonds to people who sell land. That is a way to increase the funds available to the corporation without its having to go back to the government or into the market itself. That would be a very useful tool to use. I suggest the minister should take that suggestion seriously and pursue it. It would be one way of keeping capital generated in agriculture and working in agriculture after land is sold. Very briefly, those are some of the things which the minister fails to recognize.

In the two minutes remaining to me, I want to castigate the minister as strongly as I can for some of the things he has said on Bill C-46, which is the meat import bill. He mentioned speedy passage. This bill was referred to in the Speech from the Throne which was delivered over a year ago. My colleague from Medicine Hat (Mr. Hargrave) and myself have both asked the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard) to get the meat import bill on the order paper so we can get it through second reading.

The committee on agriculture did not meet for two months at the beginning of this year. We would have been very happy to get that bill through second reading and into committee. The agriculture committee has had one meeting on the meat import bill, and that was yesterday. Yet that bill was promised in the throne speech over a year ago. In my opinion, it is disgraceful that we could not have had that bill through committee, back into the House for third reading and thus have it passed. There was willingness by our party and also, as far as the NDP was concerned, to put it through second reading very quickly. I find it incredible that the minister would come here and say that we should have had speedy passage on Bill C-46. All the minister had to do was talk to his own government House leader to get it on the order paper. The opposition would not have put up any more speakers than needed in order to get it to committee.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order. It being six o'clock, it is my duty to inform the House that pursuant to