

Agriculture

farm boys but they say: Let us see how well he will sell our case to the cabinet. That is how the last Minister of Agriculture lost his seat. He failed to sell the farmers' case to the cabinet. I would not want this to happen to the present Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) because he is a likeable lad. This is why I urge him today to make an effort to sell his case to the cabinet. I do not want to continue to read in farm papers that unfortunately there is scant evidence that even the minister's cabinet colleagues are listening. It is very depressing to think that our lovable Minister of Agriculture has no sales ability in the cabinet. He can talk like a farmer to the farmers and they like that. He has the odd story he can tell which goes over well, but the beautiful thing about him is that his speeches are brief. Rarely does he make a long one. It is not because he does not know quite a bit about the industry, but farmers do not like longwinded politicians and they appreciate his short speeches. But he will have to start producing.

An hon. Member: We don't appreciate long speeches either.

Mr. Horner (Crowfoot): There is no fear of that. I am limited to 20 minutes, whether or not I might need more. The minister will have to start producing. His cabinet colleagues must be told that inflation cannot be fought by hurting the farmer. The farmer is the last person who should be hurt. I should like to read the following statement from an editorial in the *Country Guide* for October:

Federal government has been under tremendous pressure to do something to dampen the fires of inflation. In its frantic scramble to respond, it turned its guns on, of all groups, farmers.

This is the last thing the minister should allow his cabinet colleagues to do in the fight against inflation.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, following the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) is not an easy task. He spoke about the beef industry and what we were doing. We will be meeting with the people representing the beef industry tomorrow morning in Ottawa. They have been asked to come here to discuss some suggestions or proposals that we want to discuss with them—

Mr. Horner (Crowfoot): I hope you will talk to the whole cabinet about it.

Mr. Whelan:—before any action is taken. Let us be fair, however. If you remember, the beef industry people told me and the government to keep hands off. They thought they could cope with the situation on their own.

Some hon. Members: You did not.

Mr. Whelan: This is what they wanted until about a week ago last Monday. We have been following the circumstances and checking with our counterparts in the United States as well as checking with the industry in Canada, the producers of beef, packing firms, etc. to find out what they thought should be done. We are ready to make proposals to the beef industry tomorrow and will do so.

[Mr. Horner (Crowfoot).]

Too many people have been saying that we put an embargo on beef. We did not do that. Normal marketing of beef was allowed to continue, and those who made applications for export of beef from Canada found that hardly a permit or application was refused. They were issued readily even before the United States took off their price freeze. I do not know what those who are advocating a price freeze—the party across the way has advocated quite openly a 90-day freeze—thought would happen if a freeze were imposed, but I hope they forecast something different from what has happened in the United States following the removal of the freeze.

The Secretary of Agriculture of the United States, when a price freeze was discussed, said that anybody who would impose a price freeze on food would be an idiot. Two weeks later the President of the United States put on a price freeze. The Secretary of Agriculture then stated that he and the President had agreed and that when the President made a decision he always agreed with him. However, the price freeze caused utter chaos in the North American beef market. It disrupted the normal patterns of trading.

We took off our tariff on beef in the spring. We discussed this with our U.S. counterparts at that time, and I think they fully intended to remove their tariff. But they did not. This was a disappointment to us because we would have liked to see the free-flowing market continue. It was disrupted by their action much more than by ours. Recently I heard that one U.S. official who spoke in Canada said that when Canadians make a proposal about removing a tariff the Americans will listen. If that is so, they did not hear very well because we did take off the tariff but they did not remove theirs.

Many people are not aware that we have a low tariff or no tariff on many of the commodities that come into Canada while the United States has tariffs on products going into their country. Let us take corn as an example. We have an 8 per cent tariff on corn coming into our country while they have a 25 per cent tariff on corn going into the United States. Soybeans enter Canada free of tariff, while soybeans going into the United States have a 60 cents a bushel tariff. So they are not the freetraders some people think they are.

The fact that some hon. members do not know what the government agricultural policy is does not mean there is no policy. Some hon. members do not understand agriculture and farming well enough to recognize a good policy when they see one. Agriculture is the most important single industry in the entire nation and it is one of the most successful. It became successful as a result of the fact that the policies of the federal government did not stand in the way of development but made it possible for farmers today to reap the largest cash income in our history, to sell to more markets than ever before and to provide this nation with the best quality food in the entire world, and plenty of it.

● (1530)

Those who say there is no national policy in agriculture do not know what they are talking about. There is a national policy, and a very good one. If anyone wants to attempt to put the government's agricultural policy into a