

cannot establish new prices in the market because the market establishes them itself.

● (0100)

So we find that a group of people from one end of this country to the other are simply victims of the collective bargaining system, with a government unwilling to take action to give the protection they need. Farmers have doubled their output in the last ten years, while others in our society have increased their output by only 40 per cent. The way this country responds to that is to shrug its shoulders and say, "So what".

We are here tonight to debate an issue of paramount importance, yet a third minister has arrived just moments ago, and no minister has stayed here for longer than the duration of his own speech.

This is a problem of tremendous importance to an industry, and I simply repeat that agriculture, fisheries and forestry are considered to be low on the totem pole.

When these problems arise, people simply turn a blind eye and do not care. Considering once more how agriculture is treated with a low priority in this country, recently the cost of food was reported by Statistics Canada to be reduced. There is a hoop-la about that. Not once has it been mentioned that the reduced cost of this food is borne by the farmer. The farmer has paid for every cent of advantage which has gone to the consumer for cheaper food. I think we should recognize that farm people have certainly increased their efficiency, and they are doing it more cheaply, yet they do not have the protection of society which they ought to have.

According to the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, 460 million people live in a state of malnutrition. To paint the picture clearly, that is as many people as there are in Britain, Germany, France, Italy, and the rest of Europe. While there is a famine aspect to the world food crisis, the malnutrition aspect is an old scandal and one which the rich, well fed nations have learned to live with, Mr. Speaker.

We witnessed just recently what we in this country called an energy crisis. We worried about where we would get fuel to heat our homes and to drive our cars. Through that crisis there was only a whisper of the fact that nitrogen fertilizer is 100 per cent a product of the petroleum industry. As we look around the world we note that this year we will fall three and a half billion tons short of its nitrogen fertilizer, requirements. No emphasis was placed on that problem, and the simple reason was that it dealt with agriculture. It is about time that this nation began to realize what agriculture is. It is the business of food production, and without it we do not live, we do not develop strong minds and bodies, and we do not have a society of value or worth.

Part of this debate tonight is meant to give a status to an industry which has been held far too long at the bottom of the totem pole, along with fisheries and forestry.

To share some information, I would like to point out that Canada is the world's largest exporter of rapeseed. Rapeseed was brought into this country after studies and experiments at the dominion experimental stations. The investment in those experiments was extremely small, yet

Feed Grain

rapeseed has developed into a billion dollar industry for this country. When we consider the importance of agriculture to Canada and compare that with the amount expended in agricultural research, we should be ashamed.

We should also recognize just the very fact of growing wheat. Most people do not realize that if it were not for experimental studies, which are continually developing new varieties of wheat, the province of Manitoba and most of southern Saskatchewan would not be able to grow wheat longer than five years, because that is about how long it takes for the species of varieties which cause rust in wheat grains to develop enough strength against the rust resistant varieties. I am trying once again to demonstrate that it is the experimental stations which are making it possible that the wheat industry continues in southern Saskatchewan and in most of Manitoba. The amount of money we put into that is extremely small.

We are once again in an emergency debate with regard to agriculture because we have allowed it to grow to the crisis stage, rather than looking at this as a major industry, and with a philosophy and objective that this industry should not only be protected from coast to coast, but we should give it a major importance both in research and support prices and in terms of selling it abroad. This is an industry which could become as well to do as any other, and which could assist us in an economic way. Certainly the data we have ought to underscore that. It is a simple fact that Saunders wheat brought another billion dollar industry to this country, which cost the experimental stations almost nothing in terms of their work.

In 1978 the international soil scientists conference will be coming to this country. The support of the federal government for that conference is so meagre that it is shameful to announce it in the House. Yet in Vancouver this year there is tremendous support in the form of millions of dollars going into the international urbanization conference which will be held in that city. I do not begrudge it getting that money, but I simply point out that the agricultural industry, which feeds us, gives us healthy bodies and minds, protects us from going blind from a deficiency of vitamin A, and which provides protein and energy for our bodies, is the very industry we simply do not recognize as having importance in this country.

We are here tonight because there is a crisis in Quebec, which is just another crisis heaped upon crises because the government started off with the wrong philosophy in the first place. We are talking about animals which are about to starve, about poultry which will not be getting food, about elevators which are empty, and about transportation to them and other elevators which are full. But farmers do not have that transportation, and yet we are being told that the farmers of Quebec can get grain. The fact of the matter is that the roads will not provide sufficiently, and there is nothing to account for the expense. Once again the government has not cared about the most important industry.

● (0110)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Bussières (Portneuf): Madam Speaker, I am obviously quite happy to take part in this debate which deals with feed grain supplies to farmers and agricultural