

of economic activity. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson), who was here a few moments ago, is from the west. He should realize that the policy initiatives that he is taking to deal with the growing crisis in agriculture are confounding the issue rather than providing solutions. I just mentioned that in passing because there will be much debate on the subject when it finally comes before Parliament. Bill C-176, the marketing legislation, was soundly shellacked when the Standing Committee on Agriculture was in Winnipeg last week. A spokesman clearly pointed out that if the terms of Bill C-176 are ever implemented, the diversified agricultural industry in Manitoba will be virtually destroyed. The same applies to the grain stabilization act, and the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act, which the government is threatening to remove from the statute books.

I wish to deal with another matter that perhaps does not seem important, but which is vitally important to the agricultural community. In 1963, capital grants for agricultural fairs were suspended. There have been no capital grants for almost eight years. The government has promised action. Some of the facilities at these agricultural centres are becoming quite shabby. As a result, there is a growing and urgent need for some infusion of capital under either the suspended program or a substitute so that the agricultural industry might be given this boost.

In addition to the problems of agriculture, the government is promoting the depopulation of the smaller rural communities and encouraging the rush to the big metropolis. This aggravates the current unemployment and other social problems which the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion was decrying in his recent speech to the Liberal party in Quebec. He prophesied that unless the social confusion and disorganization of the urban communities were toned down, we would be heading for severe trouble. Fundamental to this trend are government policies that encourage depopulation of the rural areas and concentration of the population in a few large urban areas where the social problems are so severe that it is almost impossible for civic administrations to deal with them.

In the western provinces there is a constant attrition of fundamental services. Transportation services such as railroads and air services are being downgraded as are postal services. The National Film Board used to play an important role in creating a sense of national unity and purpose by means of audio-visual education. This is now being downgraded. Local units are being closed in favour of the concentrated bureaucracy, Information Canada, in the larger centres. The CRTC is enunciating policies that militate and discriminate against the outlying areas. I have already indicated that the winter works program was discontinued, as were roads to resources. The tariffs are going up and up. This is direct discrimination against the Prairie community.

I read a very interesting speech by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) to the Canadian Importers' Association of Montreal on January 20. As a result of that speech, the Winnipeg *Free Press*, a liberal journal, referred to the policy enunciated as "This

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is protection in excelsis". That statement appeared in the February 1 edition in a leading editorial headed "Pepin's Promise".

To show that the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce was doing some delicate tight-rope walking on that particular occasion, I wish to quote some interesting extracts from his speech:

Yes indeed! But what, where from, where to, how freely and how much must we export and import?

Sorry, as you well know, no magic formula is available to answer these questions. When the clichés have been exhausted,—

As an interpolation, I may say he uttered most of the clichés.

—what is needed is knowledge, judgment, wise reconciliation of conflicting interests, proper balance of advantages, the play of competition, consideration for economic, social, political, even ethnic...national, regional, professional factors.

The key word is "balance". I often point out that the balancing act is the most important act parliament has ever passed. I should like to illustrate how this balancing act has, nevertheless, been implemented in recent Canadian trade policy. As a matter of fact, this is my only objective today.

• (4:40 p.m.)

The response, in this balancing act, has been protection in excelsis, which does extreme harm to the basic industry of the prairies and runs completely counter, in direction, to some of the more desirable programs which the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion is attempting to promote.

Before concluding, I should like to ask the minister whether he intends to say some encouraging words shortly in connection with the situation which has arisen in western Manitoba as a result of the government's decision to close down the Rivers Air Base. I know the minister intends to visit that part of the country to survey the situation there. One of the main causes of unemployment in the area concerned arises from this phase-out, based on government policy.

The city of Brandon, other surrounding communities and rural municipalities, along with the Province of Manitoba, have directed a brief to the hon. gentleman requesting that he designate this area as a special area under DREE so that adequate alternative programs might be developed. This is the sort of constructive initiative which is required if we are to use the powers available under DREE to deal with this fundamental economic situation, that is to say, with regional disparity. I trust that as a result of the many representations which have been made, mostly by spokesmen from this side of the House, the government will break through its hard shell of insensitivity and appreciate that when we talk about 700,000 people unemployed we are not dealing with statistics but with people—people with families, young people, and all the social and economic ills which flow from the tragedy of unemployment. Perhaps when the ministers are in the west, down on the hustings during the cold winter atmosphere this weekend, this message will come home to them loud and clear.