

Business of Supply

detract from the strength and value of the debate. It may well be that the house will accept this proposal.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): I take it that the members of the opposition would like to hear from my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, at some length with respect to the government's proposals. I wonder whether the proposed amendment could be amended by stipulating that the minister might be given the opportunity to speak for 40 minutes and otherwise the rule would apply as suggested by the hon. member?

Mr. Baldwin: I recognize the seriousness of the subject, but this proposal would probably prevent three members of the minister's own party from having the opportunity to speak. The whole purpose is to have wider participation. I am sure the minister would be glad to give members of his party who would be brave enough to participate in the debate an opportunity to say what he otherwise would have said in the additional 30 minutes.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): I must say, Mr. Speaker, that I misunderstood the motion. My understanding was that the opposition wanted to hear the government's proposals in this regard. I regret the fact that my colleague is not to be given the extra time.

Mr. Baldwin: He is entitled to 30 minutes in the debate as the Standing Order is now. Surely he can contract the 30 minutes to 20 minutes. This is all we are asking. If this cannot be accepted, the proposition must fail.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): The Minister of Agriculture is prepared to agree to this. I must say I regret that his time is to be cut down in this way, but we are prepared to agree.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I have spoken to those concerned in this part of the house. Could we agree on 30 minutes for the first spokesman of the Conservative Party, 30 minutes for the minister, 20 minutes for the spokesmen of the other two parties and 10 minutes for the balance of the speakers?

Mr. Speaker: Is this agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Danforth: Mr. Speaker, the motion of non-confidence before the house this afternoon was not drafted without a great deal of serious consideration of all of its implications. Certainly there is no conceivable op-

[Mr. Baldwin.]

portunity to defeat the government with its numerical superiority in the house at this time. But if the motion serves to draw to Your Honour's attention and that of hon. members opposite the very serious plight of all segments of the agricultural industry today, it will have served its purpose.

● (3:30 p.m.)

I am supported in moving this motion, Mr. Speaker, by the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Southam). The reason I asked for his support, which was granted quite eagerly, was to emphasize that this problem exists in all parts of Canada, from the east coast to the west coast. It is a problem on which public attention has been focused because of the dire position of the wheat growers and grain growers of western Canada and of the farmers of eastern Canada, but the economic problem is not confined to them.

I was rather alarmed, indeed shocked, to learn when travelling in the west that a minister or ministers of the Crown in meeting with farmers there had implied that one of the reasons no solutions were being put forward by the government to alleviate the farmers' economic problems was that they could not obtain the understanding, the consideration or the sympathy of eastern Canada. I reject that theory in its entirety. It is the old one of divide and conquer. We in eastern Canada are very much aware of the problems in the west. The only major difference is that many farmers in the west are unable to dispose of their crops while farmers in eastern Canada, although they can sell their crops, in many instances must sell them below the cost of production. Therefore Canadian farmers in general are directly concerned with the government's agricultural policy, and they have every right to be concerned because it directly affects their livelihood.

Many grave criticisms have been expressed by leaders of agricultural groups about the lack of policy of the government, about the confused policies of the government, about agricultural policies that seem to be working toward opposite ends. Surely after almost seven years in office the government should be able to indicate to the great agricultural industry where it thinks its place should be in our economic life, what its long-term and short-term goals should be, and what the future is for the young Canadian farmer. These are questions that should be answered.