

I wanted to put these thoughts before the House today, Mr. Speaker. I support the motion that has been moved and seconded by the two hon. members.

[Translation]

Mr. Charles-Eugène Dionne (Kamouraska): Mr. Speaker, rereading the text of the motion before the House, I realize that the wording used reveals, in learned terms, that its purpose is to point out several administrative blunders in various fields and to prove that the numerous errors of the present administrators have helped discourage the farmers in particular.

Of course, the topic is very important; it deserves the contribution of as many members as possible, and their greatest possible understanding, with a view to calling the attention of those whose responsibility it is to take decisions on the various reactions of the people, many of whom I feel have exhausted their reserve of patience, after having multiplied their representations and their claims, whenever they felt them to be timely.

We all know that farming methods have changed, as methods have in other fields, and that the consequences of those periods of adjustment or orientation imposed sacrifices on a large percentage of the farmers who, in large numbers, were forced to borrow from the Farm Credit Corporation. Moreover, the fact that too many politicians seem to have considered agriculture as an industry of little importance, except at election time, has not helped them any.

• (4:00 p.m.)

For a number of years, the various governments were concerned with getting as many workers as possible into agriculture and now, this same farmer cannot operate his farm economically without relying on government assistance.

I have read a very up to the point article by Mr. Lucien Gosselin, a realistic agronomist of my area, which I will quote in part:

It is often said that agriculture is a school of common sense and observation, which leads the farmer of today to seek the middle term between the theoreticians lost in the clouds and those who will not give up ancient farming methods. It will be argued that some routine methods of our grandfathers must be dropped, but it is often comforting to rely on their good judgment always based on plain common sense. That is perhaps one of our natural resources which is most threatened today by the sheer might of our techniques.

Some claim that the size, the enlargement of farms might be a solution. I can understand that a farmer should have a reasonably large farm, but the acreage is not necessarily the solution to the problem. By enlarging farms exceedingly, do we not run the risk of creating other problems more difficult to solve? Is the problem of western wheat producers solved? And yet their farms are certainly big enough.

We must at all cost preserve the importance of farming, because of the permanent role it assumes as regards production of human food.

The world is facing now the most serious problem on earth which is to feed a constantly increasing population. "We might, in a few years, be faced with a problem which will overshadow all our present concerns", said

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Dr. Raymond Ewell, vice-president of the State University of New York. Experts who have considered the problem of world hunger have made several other statements to the effect that starvation could very well become one of the greatest calamities of history.

On the basis of all these statements, we have the right to wonder what are the intimate thoughts of our leaders, of our government heads, or of all the other groups, when they advocate a decrease in the number of farmers. Our government goes even as far as subsidizing some farmers for not producing like what is happening in Western Canada. This is not the first time that our politicians implement such a policy. In 1938, the Canadian taxpayers contributed several million dollars in taxes to be deprived of bread. The government at that time could not find a better solution to the problem of farmers producing too much wheat.

With respect to the dairy industry in Eastern Canada, this government has changed its program by resorting to deductions from subsidy payments in order to pay for the operating costs involved in surplus production.

In 1967-68 farmers from Eastern Canada paid more than four million dollars. In 1968-69 they paid seven million and in 1969-70 more than 13 million. It is a kind of fine they have to pay because they produce too much. It is levied against them because they produce too much milk. The reports are incomplete. That is a rather strange way of encouraging production. In our present system things get complicated when there are too many products. Advocates of the "just society" are unable to spread abundance and prefer to follow the guidelines of the scarcity system dictated by the financiers.

We could build up sufficient food reserves and make them available to the Canadian people and this for several years in advance. There are various means to process raw materials and modern methods of conservation and we can also alter the distribution system of goods. We could establish a mechanism for adequate purchasing power in order to make that wealth of goods available to the citizens instead of depriving them for the only purpose of maintaining prices at a certain level.

We could also set up a distribution chain of foodstuffs to feed under nourished people. While Canadians would be assured of a decent living, they would also be ready to help underprivileged countries. Such a policy, in addition to being an example of Christian charity, would be more readily accepted by Canadians than interest-free loans due in 50 years or more, while in Canada, a great number of people have to make do with a welfare allowance which barely enables them to subsist.

For several years already, practical suggestions have been submitted to governments by those concerned with finding solutions to the problems of food supply, through a marketing of dairy products with various flavours. We feel that milk could advantageously replace our numerous soft drinks. It would be better for the health of children, especially now that we favour a return to healthy habits and to natural food. This would also be excellent for dairy producers, particularly when one