

Farm Income

bucked the trend with sharply higher purchases. The estimates show a general decline except for Quebec. The separatist premier of that province says that the agricultural situation is very bad, yet they increased their farm machinery purchases by 21 per cent last year.

Let us get the facts straight. Things are not the same all over. In Ontario, the province of the hon. member for Brant, farm machinery sales increased by about 6 per cent. If Massey-Ferguson plants are closing, it is not totally the fault of Canada. There is a general depression in agriculture in all countries of the world, especially those producing surplus food products. We still have more net return to farmers in this country than ever before.

Members opposite talk about how farm income has gone down. We would like to see it up. The hon. member for Elgin knows that those farmers who look after themselves without great masses of government legislation and great reams of paper are more efficient. The hon. member for Elgin was a dairy farmer and he made a good living at it. He told me that himself.

Mr. Wise: That was before you were Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Whelan: I think he was a better dairy farmer than he is a member of parliament. When he comes to the House, he presents nothing but gloom and doom with regard to agriculture. The people of Elgin sent the hon. member to Ottawa to represent them because they knew he had expertise in agriculture. However, he has not kept up that expertise. He was a better producer of agricultural products than agricultural economics.

Talking about income, the total was 1 per cent ahead of 1976 income and about four tenths of 1 per cent ahead of the previous record of 1975, \$10.07 billion. It exceeded the \$10 billion mark for the second time in the history of our country. Costs were up, but what caused income to go down was world prices of grain. We export 74 per cent of our production of cereal grain. No other country in the world exports that much. True enough, we are financing the treasuries of countries like Japan, the OPEC countries and the European community.

The hon. member talked about how proud I was when we went to the bankers' meeting. He is damn right I am proud that I do not have to put that much money into the farm economy to make it one of the healthiest and most enviable in the world. It is right here in Canada, put together by ten provinces working together with the federal government.

No one else in the northern hemisphere can brag like I do. Everyone in this country should brag about it. We have one of the most productive and efficient agricultural industries in the world. In the last 30 years we have increased our productivity by about 500 per cent. This is something to which we can point. That is why the Chinese, Russians and those from other socialist countries come to see how we operate. They want to know how we can be so productive. They cannot understand how a country with only 5 per cent of its people in agriculture can produce so much for themselves and so much for the other

[Mr. Whelan.]

people of the world. It is because we have the know-how and the ability.

We still have incentives in our programs to be that productive. We are not telling the Canadian farmers this year to discontinue wheat and grain production, as they are with the supply management system in the United States. I was there yesterday. They are going to come out with \$75 an acre payments to keep the land idle. They have all kinds of other programs. When I left Washington this morning, the farmers were there by the thousands. They were in the offices and all over the buildings. The senators and congressmen react to that, especially the senators. Every senator has some rural constituents no matter where he is from, whether it be New York or California. It would not hurt if our members in the House of Commons had more rural constituents. Maybe they would then pay more attention to them.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Whelan: The hon. member's colleagues go to the city of Windsor in my constituency, which is 96 per cent urban, and lambaste me because of the price of food. When we came back this morning, I asked him if he had said anything about marketing boards. He replied that he sure had but the media did not report it. I have no way of knowing whether it was an unfair speech or an unfair reporter. This is something I find a bit hard to accept.

The hon. member for Elgin talked about the roll-over tax. I agree with him, it is important. The hon. member for Elgin could have said that this government did something revolutionary, and parliament sanctioned it, when it allowed the transfer of farm property to a son or daughter.

Mr. Wise: That is the family farm.

Mr. Whelan: Yes, the family farm. At lot of farms are incorporated and are now family corporations. No other country has what we have at the present time. If there is an inequity and we can find a way to get around it, we will because we want the family farm to continue.

Many people talk about efficiency. The former chairman of the Food Prices Review Board and other learned and knowledgeable people said maybe we want bigger and more efficient units. Twenty universities in the United States of America—not just one—all came to the conclusion that the efficient family farm is the most important thing in our society in terms of food production. Those universities did not point to the great socialist type of farming, the great co-operative type of farming or anything else. They pointed to the family farm. Twenty universities conducted that survey, and they all said the same thing. We are also strong believers in family farms, marketing boards, programs, etc. These are the kinds of things we want.

● (1602)

With regard to marketing boards, there was a ministers' conference held in Winnipeg last January, and every minister there supported that type of program. Some say there has been