

The Budget

Fourth, better target research funds to meet the goals that are set out by farmers and agribusiness.

Fifth, improve regulations relating to safety, fair competition, and dispute settlement so the marketplace can work better.

As well, we propose these changes to the Canadian Wheat Board: first, make the Wheat Board accountable to the people who pay the bills, that is western Canadian grain farmers. Second, allow the board to handle any crop, but permit farmers and grain companies the right to compete with the board. Third, continue Canada's loan guarantees as long as other countries offer them. Fourth, give farmers the right to choose between a pool price and a daily cash price.

I believe these changes to the Canadian Wheat Board will increase the price that farmers get from the marketplace. This increase in market revenue will reduce payments to safety net programs, a reduction that is not included in the Reform budget on agriculture.

In conclusion, the government made few changes in the area of agriculture in this budget, nor should they have without a comprehensive review of agriculture policy. However, studies similar to the one being conducted in the dairy, egg and poultry industries are virtually worthless because the scope of these studies is limited from the start. In this study, supply management is retained as a fundamental principle rather than allowing farmers and others affected to discuss this principle and decide if supply management is needed at all.

While a study of agriculture—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I very much regret interrupting the hon. member. Is it his maiden speech? I do not think it is. Would the member indicate whether it is his maiden speech. It is not; then I am afraid his time is up. I am sure he will get a chance to make the point he was just going to finish with prior to all these questions that are waiting to be asked.

Mr. Morris Bodnar (Saskatoon—Dundurn): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has touched on rail line transportation. In Alberta there has been some experimentation with privatization of abandoned rail lines, where they have been taken over by private entrepreneurs who have been successful in the operation of these lines.

• (1800)

Could the hon. member tell us whether his party favours the privatization of rail lines in Canada?

Mr. Benoit: Mr. Speaker, on the question of the privatization of railroads and the question of the privatization of rolling stock, the answer is that we would certainly consider privatizing both.

There has to be a bit more study on the issue, but I believe there must be more competition allowed for the railways than

there is now. Privatizing rail lines or nationalizing rail lines and allowing competition is important. How it can be done is up for debate still.

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works and Government Services): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his address. He made a number of potentially very useful suggestions with respect to cost cutting.

It would be very helpful if my hon. colleague could indicate to us what impact if implemented the list of suggestions would have on unemployment. In other words how many more unemployed Canadians would there be?

My second question is with respect to the self-funded unemployment insurance program. Does the member know whether or not that would increase or decrease the premiums, whether or not it would increase or decrease the payouts to unemployed Canadians?

Mr. Benoit: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate those questions. They are both excellent questions.

In terms of the last question first on whether unemployment insurance will increase or decrease premiums, we are saying that as a self-directed plan the decisions will be made by employers and employees on whether premiums are raised, benefits are reduced, or who in fact is eligible under the plan. It is up to the employers and employees to make the decisions on the plan, as they should, because they are the ones who are funding the plan and we say it should be strictly them funding the plan.

On the question respecting how much the cuts would affect unemployment, I believe the cuts we have laid out may affect unemployment over a very short term. I believe very strongly that as these cuts are made and as Canadians see that the government is finally dealing with its overspending problem, unemployment will be reduced within a year and a half to two years. Economics is not an exact science but that is my belief.

Mr. John English (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I too welcome the suggestions made by the hon. member, but I recall that during the debate on the GATT we talked about subsidization of grain exports in many countries including Canada, United States and the European Community.

In the case of those countries we recalled that Canadian subsidization of grain exports amounted roughly to somewhere between 30 and 35 per cent; less than the Europeans and probably a little less than the Americans but considerably more than the Australians and the Argentinians. In the case of the Australians it is almost nil. In the case of the Argentinians it costs them to export because they subsidize their manufacturers.