

Cost of Living

The people of western Canada know that in 1963 big sales of wheat were made to Russia and China which was paid for in gold and silver. The Russians paid for that grain in gold at the rate of \$35 to \$37 an ounce. They are now buying grain with gold at a value of \$100 an ounce. This grain can be paid for with three plane loads of gold bullion shipped from Russia to London. The price of our commodity has not gone up that much, but the value of our dollar has gone down. The farmers and ranchers in western Canada know that our dollar has been devalued 40 per cent in relation to the yen and 30 per cent in relation to the Deutschmark. When they realize that we have devalued up to 40 per cent in terms of the currency of our trading partners, is it any wonder that our feed grains and beef prices have gone up?

Currency values play as important a role in respect of farm prices as does supply and demand, but they represent a longer term price stimulus. The minister made much about encouraging an increase in the supply of agricultural products, but it is well known in western Canada that forces have been used to stop farm production. The extent of production is much less than the farmers are capable of producing. Let me refer to the *Montreal Gazette* of August 11 which states:

In the mid 60's the federal government pushed dairy farming as the specialization. Within 10 years, all but a couple of dairy farmers in the Hudson area, 30 miles west of Montreal, were closed down by the cost of equipment health inspectors forced them to buy.

"I gave up" said Davidson.

We have seen the federal government put export controls on our rapeseed crop, a crop which receives absolutely no competition from the United States. We ended up this crop year with a carry-over of some 25 million bushels of rapeseed, yet many feed lots in my area are empty. Cattlemen are confused and disillusioned at a time when they should be going for broke with every possible assistance from the government. It is time the government woke up to the potential of our agricultural industry. This should be one of our nation's major growth industries in this decade, the largest sectors being livestock and grain.

This government receives over \$1 per bushel on the effort that goes into the production, harvesting and marketing of wheat. This government is giving \$4 million to the province of Saskatchewan under a crop insurance plan, and the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) has criticized us for holding up this measure. He claims it is a big deal, but the federal contribution is less than one per cent of what it receives from the industry.

The agricultural proposals made by this government are about as imaginative, exciting and dramatic as watching the grass grow. As the Canadian farm population declines, the political force in this government against higher farm prices grows. This government wants to reform our basic system and turn the Canadian agricultural industry into a public utility controlled by bureaucrats. We are seeing policies imposed by stealth, when what we need is more discussion on options available to producers. We are not taking advantage of the technology available to the agricultural industry, and there is no incentive to do so. Our policies are short-range with little or no long-term thinking.

[Mr. Hamilton (Swift Current-Maple Creek).]

● (0250)

The greatest problem, I suspect, in respect of wheat in particular is that it has been responding to short-term pressures. It is not a matter of hindsight that we face but a serious food shortage around the world in 1973. This was predicted in 1967 by concerned and very knowledgeable people. There must be a complete turn-around in our federal agricultural policy.

We need a new program, a rebuilding, and possibly a new homesteading act. I think most of the problems of the big cities could be solved through better use of our rural areas. With regard to inflation and the rising cost of living, we have arrived at a situation where the government is just standing still.

Mr. Ken Hurlburt (Lethbridge): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to enter this debate. I think it is only fair to notify my colleagues of the reason I am here, and the only reason: it is because concerned people in my constituency, free enterprising people, have become fed-up with the bureaucracy that has been running our country for the past 10 years. They feel that governments should advise, administer and direct, and not take on the managerial role. I think it would be only fair to advise my colleagues of the practical experience I have had in the livestock and in the auction business. I wish some of my colleagues on the other side of the House would come into our country and familiarize themselves with our type of operation. If they did so, they might have a better understanding of the situation.

An hon. Member: Perhaps we would not be very welcome out there.

Mr. Hurlburt: You would be welcome. I recognize there are two official languages, but in our business we have a language of our own. In our business, if some of the cows in a cow herd are not producing, we get rid of them for whatever can be obtained for them. I think that has been one of the contributing factors in respect of the high cost of living today—we cannot get rid of the non-producers.

With your permission, Mr. Speaker, perhaps I might tell you what would happen in our country. If after a study of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) we found that his father was a very great man and that his mother was a fabulous lady, but that for some reason or other the progeny of these two great people had not produced, we would get rid of them at any cost, that is, the progeny of this great sire and dam who did not produce and attracted other people who did not produce who, in the interim period, attracted the members of the New Democratic Party. We would take any price. The auctioneer would say, "I'm bid \$20 for 109 Liberal non-producers. Will anyone bid me \$25? I'm bid \$25 with 31 NDP thrown in. Do I hear \$30? Sold, 140 non-producers for \$25."

Mr. Speaker, during my first year in the House of Commons, representing the constituency of Lethbridge, I have found it sad to see our party's attempts to give the Canadian people a better deal frustrated at every move by the NDP leader and his party. It is no wonder that our leader contends today that there are not three opposition parties opposing the government as they are supposed to