

side of the House. The people of this country, and particularly the farm and agricultural communities, put their trust and confidence in the minister, and expressed their feelings on the matter in no uncertain terms on July 8, 1974.

The hon. member for Windsor West (Mr. Gray) earlier today said that only 6 per cent of the labour force is involved in agriculture and the provision of food. While that may be true, I would strongly point out, Mr. Speaker, that the other 94 per cent of us will be in a terrible mess if that 6 per cent should decide to stop supplying basic necessities at a reasonable and economical price.

I respect the hon. member for Windsor West in his attempts at upholding the rights of the consumer, and laud him for that stand. But I hope he did not imply that the 6 per cent he talked about were unimportant to the remainder of this country's citizens. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that he was trying to point out the great importance of that 6 per cent of our population to all segments of our economy.

Too many times we get the impression that farm stabilization legislation is a device used by government to help those poor downtrodden, backward bumpkins out on the back forty who simply cannot look after themselves. Mr. Speaker, in many cases support prices and stabilization plans are in reality consumer subsidies that are of benefit not to the farmer but to the consumer. Ask a western wheat farmer about the two price wheat system, or a milk producer about the dairy subsidy.

I hope that hon. members of this House who represent urban areas will pause to reflect for just a moment on exactly where we sit in this country. As consumers we tend to forget that farmers are also consumers, indeed very large consumers—consumers of petroleum, consumers of all of the commodities and services, consumers of farm machinery, of automobiles, and consumers that in some instances have been taken to the cleaners like no other group. Ask the farmer about price rises in fertilizer, farm machinery, machinery parts, binder twine, to name a few. I have not heard members who claim to be concerned about consumers create much of a hue and cry about these people or about protecting their jobs.

We have been asked where the total cost of this bill will fall. Mr. Speaker, I would pose a counter question. Where will the burden fall when farmers say to heck with it and quit producing the essential foodstuffs we all rely on, and tell the small businessman, the factory worker, the corporate executives, labour union leaders and their members of parliament to try to get along without them. We, as consumers, may think we have it tough now, but if that happens hamburger at \$4 a pound will look cheap. Despite fantastic prices in the parliamentary restaurant even my hon. friend, the member for Edmonton Centre (Mr. Paproski), would not be able to get nourishment from an empty plate.

We might as well face the facts. Farmers throughout this land of ours, whether in British Columbia or the maritimes, Ontario, Quebec, or the rolling prairies, are all concerned about today's conditions and the outlook for tomorrow. More than one has come to me since July 8 and suggested the possibility of withholding farm produce to point out their problems to the rest of Canada. I can tell you, Sir, that if they did so for only a week or two, all

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Canadians would view the farmer and his importance in a brand new light. These same farmers, beef producers, hog producers and yes, egg producers too, have all told me the farmers of Canada need the stabilization bill, and need it now. They ask what the Minister of Agriculture and the government are going to do for agriculture in this country.

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In my hand I have a list of all the things the government and the Minister of Agriculture have done for consumers and farmers. In 1972 provincial marketing boards and egg producer boards signed agreements implementing a national egg marketing plan. Let me also refer to the Prince Edward Island agreement on the small farm development program, to changes requested by major livestock industry organizations in the contents of the blue book, to the Nova Scotia agreement on the small farm development program, and to the federal crop loss assistance program designed to help farmers in the Peace River area of British Columbia and Alberta. I could list page after page of other programs which have been implemented and which continue to help the farmer and consumer.

This bill, Mr. Speaker, should not be considered as an entity unto itself; it should be looked at in conjunction with other bills before the House, bills which have been brought forward by the Minister of Agriculture and others who are concerned about farming. I am thinking of the amendments to the Farm Credit Act which we debated recently. If we provide loans to young farmers, we must make sure that they know what prices they can expect for their produce and how much they can earn. It is especially important for young farmers to know what their input costs will be. I think the farm stabilization bill, in conjunction with the amended Farm Credit Act, will provide the young farmers of tomorrow with the needed stability.

The government will soon introduce the health of animals bill, the western grain stabilization bill, and the two-price wheat bill. This legislation must be considered as one package. These bills constitute a total program. They cannot be considered in isolation. As I said, we must look at the total picture, at the total effect of these bills on the farmers of the nation.

Earlier today the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom) said that the consumer sometimes feels the farmer has been doing well enough, thank you, and we should not worry about him. Let me tell him that many farmers of my area would love to meet him face to face, would love to tell people who think his way what has happened to farm prices and input costs. In the past year input costs have risen sky high, but prices have dropped. I am sure they could convince the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville, and others who think as he does, of the wrongness of his opinions.

For, Mr. Speaker, now as never before this country goes as the farmer goes. It has always been thus. When the farmer is prosperous, this country's economy is prosperous. When he is in economic difficulty, so is the rest of our economy. The farmer is a good spender. If he has money he will buy new farm machinery; he will invest in this country. We depend on the farmer. As his economy goes, so will ours.