

Agriculture

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I think I am correct in saying that these are both middle distillates which are covered by the program. But, of course, with regard to this area of middle distillates I think the most important question, as my colleague has said, is to continue to ensure its supply, which is in a pretty tight situation, as opposed to the price question.

● (2120)

OIL—EXPORT BOYCOTT BY ARAB STATES—EFFECT ON CANADIAN SUPPLIES

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. In view of reports that the minister has received information about the disruption of supplies from the Middle East, and also the statement by a United Nations Arab diplomat that Canada might be denied future oil from Arab states, can the minister explain to the House what the situation is, and set the country straight as to whether we can expect secure supplies or whether we are, indeed, boycotted by the Arab states?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I can say, from the latest information I have from Saudi Arabia, that at least in so far as that state is concerned we are not on their embargo list as, for example, are the United States and The Netherlands. We are regarded by those states as being neutral. Therefore, we will be in the situation of having a potential interruption of supply but not the total interruption which those two countries are suffering. However, one of the most difficult points remains with regard to the port of Portland which in the wintertime is the principal source of oil for Montreal refineries. My understanding at present is that this is regarded as being an American destination, notwithstanding the fact that oil comes in bond through to Montreal. So we can anticipate, subject to further diplomatic action, some interruption the extent of which we cannot foresee at the moment.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Chair has to call orders of the day.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S.O. 58—STATE OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY UNDER GOVERNMENT POLICIES

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Horner (Crowfoot):

That this House deplores the government's inability to give leadership in developing and implementing comprehensive and co-ordinated agricultural policies and programs and regrets that by ill-advised and ad hoc remedies the government has weakened the over-all agricultural economy.

Mr. Elias Nesdoly (Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, perhaps this is not a topic that is as appealing as energy:

[Mr. Lundrigan.]

nevertheless, it is crucial to Canada, the Canadian farmers and the Canadian consumers. Earlier this evening, the minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board (Mr. Lang) indicated that the opposition parties were misleading the farmers in their statements out west. All I say to the minister is that the farmers on the Prairies are too smart to be misled by either the opposition or the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board.

He said also that the government bought some 2,000 hopper cars to facilitate the movement of grain from country elevators on the Prairies. I represent a huge riding in Saskatchewan, and I have not yet seen one of these hopper cars in my area. I believe this whole matter of buying hopper cars was not a deliberate government policy but, rather, a policy conceived in desperation during the election when the minister realized that the Liberal party in the west was in serious difficulty.

The two old-line parties, the Tories and the Liberals, have together undermined the situation of the farmers in the west. I am referring to the Liberals and the Conservatives because I believe they have been in collusion on a number of policies with which western farmers disagree. I should like to refer to two of the policies on which I believe the two parties have been in collusion and on which there have been under-the-door agreements between them. First of all, it should be mentioned that government policies with regard to brucellosis have been negligent, ill-advised and totally inadequate. I am referring to brucellosis or Bangs disease about which hon. members heard earlier this year. For five years brucellosis has been spreading throughout Saskatchewan, but the government did not do too much in this regard. Last spring they suddenly smartened up and I must admit that the compensation rates were increased. This is certainly appreciated by the farmers affected. However, the compensation rates are still far from adequate. There are still a number of improvements that could be made with regard to the administration of the Animal Contagious Diseases Act.

First, uniform compensation rates should be allowed for calves. At present there is no consistency in this regard. Some farmers are paid for calves; others are told they will not be paid for them. The farmers who are obstreperous and engage in some negotiations do get paid for them. I think there should be some consistency. Secondly, compensation rates should be higher in the spring than they are in the fall. I say this because in the spring cows are usually very thin and scrawny and do not bring the best market price for slaughter purposes. Therefore, compensation rates should be higher to compensate for the lower slaughter prices at the packing plant at that time of year.

Third, once the farmers' herds have had a positive reaction to a number of tests and it appears that the disease cannot be eradicated by conventional methods, the whole herd should be sold. Fourth, there is another problem with regard to brucellosis, that is, the whole question of timing of compensation payments. The farmers' cattle are shipped out. However, compensation payments are held back for three, four, five or six months. A farmer cannot survive if he does not have the financial means. That is why I feel that when compensation is awarded to a farmer and cattle are taken away from him, he should receive at least part