

Supply

from all over the world, and whether we like it or not—and some of us like it—we are becoming a wine drinking community. Last year we consumed nearly 45 million gallons of wine. Over half of that was Canadian wine.

People talk about what we have done and what we have not done. The hon. member for Elgin wondered what we are going to do about interest rates. I challenge him to take a real look at what we are doing about interest rates.

Mr. Mazankowski: Why hasn't Herb Gray resigned?

Mr. Whelan: The Farm Credit Corporation interest rate is 12¾ per cent. The hon. member for Vegreville is making a lot of noise over there. Alberta has created inequity in the agriculture industry by providing low interest rates for farmers in Alberta who compete with farmers in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and the rest of Canada with respect to production. They pay an interest rate of 6 per cent because they have that tremendous Heritage Fund. However, what Alberta is providing is inequity in agriculture in Canada as a whole. Under that system farmers outside Alberta will not be able to compete in a proper fashion.

Mr. Taylor: What about the hog subsidy in Quebec?

Mr. Whelan: When we talk about Canada, unity and equity, we should bear in mind that the agriculture industry could provide equity if it were administered in a proper Canadian fashion.

The hon. member for Elgin also talked about the promise to negotiate import quotas for chickens coming into Canada. When the former government made a decision through the former minister of agriculture on quotas for imports of chickens, it created a much bigger problem than I had ever foreseen. The hon. member made a decision when he was minister of agriculture which was very hard to undo. It was harder to undo than I thought it would be. We had a lot of difficulty trying to arrange meetings with the former administration in Washington. We will be dealing with a new administration, and hopefully we can renegotiate the horrible quota the former government and the former minister dealt with so ineptly.

The hon. member criticized me today for not going to Washington. He did not go to Washington either to deal with a proper quota for Canada. The hon. member wants to know what I have done about chicken quotas and about other things. He wants to know when I will make known the timetable for the meat import legislation. It has been tabled in the House and given first reading. The hon. member for Medicine Hat has said he would allow its very quick second reading in the House and a very quick hearing in committee. He says he has the approval of his caucus for this. Hopefully the former minister of agriculture has been consulted by the hon. member for Medicine Hat. If they want to do that, I am sure I can get the same kind of agreement from the congenial House leader on this side of the House and we can speed ahead with that kind of legislation as quickly as you can say it.

● (2350)

The hon. member wanted to know about the national dairy policy. I believe the Conservative party is spreading the rumour that something is going to happen to the national dairy policy because they cannot find very much wrong with agriculture in Canada. As I said earlier, the Outlook conference—the former minister of agriculture was there and he heard the discussions on the floor—was a positive meeting. Never was there a time when I have heard such positive input from all the farm leaders, the national farm leaders, the regional farm leaders, the provincial marketing boards, and the agro-business sector, about what is happening in agriculture today.

I only wish the rest of our society were as healthy as is the agricultural industry. We were here yesterday and we are here today spending long hours discussing the spending estimates of the government, but most hon. members have suggested that we spend more money. Some of them have suggested that we need more money for research, but only two members made suggestions as to what kind of research we needed. One hon. member from this side of the House and one member on the other side of the House suggested two special projects that we should have, one to control animal diseases, to control the mortality rate in newborn calves; the other member, on this side of the House, suggested that we carry out research in his riding of Timiskaming on beef production in that part of Canada.

So when we talk about all the things we are doing and what we want, I am amazed to find that the same people who criticized this government for its massive spending programs have come in here in the last two days and have said to me, "My God, find money and spend more." One of the things I said was that what I am most proud of is the responsibility I have for the most productive part of our society. Economically speaking, it is probably a part of our society which is one of the best off and probably is the most Canadian-owned part of our society. I say, Mr. Chairman, that we do not have to have huge funds to make a healthy agricultural organization and a productive industry. We know how other countries in the world envy us and our agricultural production in this land of ice and snow, a land which has such a short growing season. Our people have more than doubled their productivity in the last decade over and above anyone else in our society. That is why we are in that enviable position and why our farmers' income this year will be over \$15.5 billion, and next year it is estimated to be over \$19 billion. Sure, the inflation rate will continue, but they will be ahead of the inflation rate and they will still be able to supply a tremendous amount of food at a reasonable cost to consumers here in Canada, probably better than nearly any other nation in the world.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Whelan: I want to say something to the opposition members in the House of Commons. In this terribly important discussion on agriculture, the opposition members—are there 12 of them now in the House?

An hon. Member: Yes, 12.