

respect to what will be done and under what conditions payment will be triggered. While this bill was under consideration, for instance, the sheep people presented their position in Canadian agriculture. Production of sheep in this country has notably diminished in the past ten to 15 years. The sheep operation has declined by 15 per cent. Those presently engaged in the industry are unable to make a living unless they are operating in a specialized breeding field. Yet there has been no inclination on the part of the Department of Agriculture to fill the gap.

I suggested at one time during these discussions that it would be feasible for government to apply a tax of some sort amounting to between 2 and 5 cents a pound on wool imported into Canada. This would generate enough money to make the wool industry profitable. Moreover, it would not make a new suit or a new coat cost an extra quarter to the consumer. The effect of such a tax would be this: it would establish a solid basis upon which the sheep industry could recover at least the position it held some ten years ago. This is important to us. We should not allow any industry to deteriorate in the field of agriculture to the extent to which the sheep industry has declined. I cite this only as an example.

Like the hon. member for Medicine Hat (Mr. Hargrave) I deplore that fact that the government has even considered provincial top-loading. It allows an opportunity for provincial subsidies to interfere with the normal production of goods in the field of agriculture, very likely to the detriment of established areas of production, areas which are now our most economic. Consider the potato industry, for example. If it be the choice of provinces in Canada, other than the Atlantic provinces, to top-load in the area of potato production the result would be the dislocation of the industry as it presently exists in eastern Canada where potatoes can be more economically produced than in any other part of the country. Production in the east could be destroyed by the introduction of provincial resources beyond the control of producers in the Atlantic region.

Consider apples. These are produced in several provinces but if any province which is currently a major producer or aspires to be so chose to top-load the apple industry it could upset the industry as it exists elsewhere, for example, in British Columbia—of course, that is top-loaded now. It could upset the industry which exists in Ontario, Nova Scotia and in Quebec. Such a decision could upset the factors which normally control the production of goods in this country, namely, the conditions under which they can be best and most economically produced.

I agree there have been some amendments to the bill in this respect but I submit that their impact is dubious. The government has declined to make a firm commitment to ensure that a stabilization plan will not be top-loaded to the detriment of agriculture elsewhere in Canada. This, along with the provision for inter-departmental decision, brings me to the conclusion that the bill is certainly not satisfactory to agriculture in general.

I mentioned earlier that there has been no definite statement of policy, no specific guidelines laid down except for a complicated group of formulae which are to be administered, possibly, by Statistics Canada. These formulae do not include all the costs, particularly those

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which young farmers experience. They do not include the cost of interest on capital. They do not include the over-all picture that will allow a young farmer to carry through a difficult period in his economic progress. For this third reason, this bill does not meet the requirements of agriculture in the horticultural field.

● (1150)

I submit, Mr. Speaker, as I have said previously—if one were to continue to debate all aspects of this bill one would certainly exceed the time required by this debate—that the government has again protected itself by the enabling structure of the bill which will allow it virtually to ignore any section of the bill. The government can embark upon a policy of its own, regardless of what other sections may say, because the enabling clauses allow it to deviate in any direction that the policy of the moment may indicate.

My fourth concern was not what was in the bill itself but what was implied in the statements made by the minister and his staff. The implication was: "If agriculture is not a good boy, we are not going to help it. If you don't accept our philosophies, if you don't submit to control of production, if you don't improve your marketing structures"—and by the way, the minister found fault with the marketing in certain areas of Canada, including my own province, which I submit was something in very poor taste, something that he should very seriously reconsider—the insinuations, innuendoes and threats implied as part of the government's policy were, as I say, that agriculture must be a good boy and do what the government wants it to do or else it will not get any help.

The point I want to make is that it has been left to the discretion of the government as to what products will be included under the bill. A few have been named in the early clauses of the bill, but the government has chosen to leave the rest to its own discretion. I should like to take the time to give half a dozen examples, but if one read the various presentations of the NFU and was aware of the telephone calls and letters from hog producers in the Atlantic area as to the neglect they experienced regarding price stabilization payments and the massive losses they suffered as feed went up and pork prices went down, as well as the total lack of consideration they received, one would realize the difficulty in this area.

Then, there is the application of the subsidy on beef. While it applies primarily to the west, may I point out that the beef subsidy was so applied that a massive number of small producers of beef in rural Canada never received a nickel of subsidy.

These are aspects of the bill regarding which we should have anticipated the bill would be more specific and would have clarified the position of the farmer, so that the farmer as a producer would have known that when he got into economic difficulty he could depend on Bill C-50, the Agricultural Stabilization Act, to help him out. But in spite of all the boastings of the government regarding what it is prepared to do for young farmers, Bill C-50 spells out nothing for them. If they have to borrow capital because they did not inherit their farm, then the bill is inadequate to help them. These are the farmers about whom I am particularly concerned.