

*Rural Development*

that in principle we agree with the general terms of the measure as outlined by the minister.

We are interested in this particular measure as it relates to the province of Ontario. Although I would suggest to the house that possibly a similar type of assistance might have been available to the rural areas in another way, or under existing legislation, nevertheless we are pleased to concur in the principles as set forth by the minister. I believe that this type of assistance and this type of philosophical thinking is quite necessary.

● (7:20 p.m.)

I listened to the minister very carefully and realized that what he said applied to a number of areas in the province of Ontario. Indeed, not too long ago the provincial government prepared an economic report indicting the levels of income in several areas of Ontario, and it was revealing to note the averages stated in it. Also, a survey was completed under the aegis of the federal government covering some of the same areas. This being the case, and as I have said previously in other debates, it is difficult for people as a whole to appreciate that they are living in a poverty stricken area, or a depressed area.

One of the objections I have to the way the government has acted is with regard to the manner it has dealt with the country as a whole. Just recently we finished the debate on redistribution, and I know the minister has much sympathy with my words in this regard because he is in a similar position of extinction. The government appears to want to reduce the voice of rural Canada, and that has been evident in the way the maps were drawn. I objected to that last week, and I object again this evening on behalf of the people I represent—not that I consider myself the best representative in this house, but the people in my constituency depend on me for the things which flow from legislative and statutory government.

I have another grievance in this regard. Not too long ago I asked a question of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Greene) about the importation of pork products into this country. I relate this to the fact that the minister says the bill before us is designed to give a lift to rural areas. I tried for a number of days to get an answer from the government. It was at a time when prices received by the pork producers had reached the highest point in the history of Canada. The

minister gave an answer, cutting off my question at a certain date.

I knew I was getting the runaround and I was finally forced to put my question on the order paper so that I might get a detailed answer. As a result I found it was not just simply 2 million pounds of pork but 2½ million pounds of pork which were imported, and that very week the price went right down. Surely we should have more regard for our primary producers. If they run across a time of high return, let them enjoy it. We should not take it away from them. No one can tell me that this was not deliberate. I realize I cannot put the finger on the government and say it was responsible, but it was responsible to the degree that it did not have the interests of the pork producers at heart.

Therefore I am prepared to give the minister full marks on his philosophical thinking about what he intends to do for these people through the measure we are discussing. But, as another hon. member has said, we do not want lip service: We want action.

Before this debate is concluded the minister should lay down in clear form the procedure that a group must follow, from the municipal level right through to the federal level. It is not clear now. During the last year I had a number of groups, organizations and individuals come to me in my area asking about the procedure. On numerous occasions I was forced to say "I really do not know. Have you done this and this? Have you been to see so and so? Have you a county organization"? They have told me, "We have been through all that. How on earth do we get our problem to the responsible minister in Ottawa"? On some occasions I have used very plain words to them, but for the benefit of these people I would ask the minister to make the procedure clear.

Since I believe the minister has spoken sincerely on behalf of the rural areas, I also want him to pay attention to the type of thing which happened back in March in regard to the importation of products that tended to reduce the income of our own primary producers. You, Mr. Speaker, and the minister both know that an industrial firm has a different method of control over such a situation. I think the minister will be able to do something about it if he remains as alert as he indicated in his speech this afternoon.

The minister has mentioned the flexibility of ARDA, and that this bill will fill a gap. He also mentioned the use of the program for