

Adjournment Debate

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT
MOTION

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

AIRPORTS—LETHBRIDGE—SUGGESTED EXTENSION OF
RUNWAY

Mr. Ken Hurlburt (Lethbridge): Mr. Speaker, on July 10 I addressed a question to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand) asking whether he would give immediate consideration to the Laborde Simat report which recommends that runway 05-23 at the Lethbridge airport be lengthened to 13,000 feet, considering that southern Alberta is rapidly becoming the largest livestock feeding and processing area in Canada, exporting breeding cattle and dressed beef to the Pacific rim countries and Europe.

In this year, 1.4 million pounds of beef were exported to the Pacific rim countries. Of the 1.4 million pounds, 943,000 pounds came from Alberta. That represents 66 per cent of all beef exported from Canada. Yet in 1972 only 81,000 pounds were exported to the rim countries, with all of it coming from Alberta. If you take these figures you will find, Mr. Speaker, that from 1972 to 1973 exports of beef from Alberta to the rim countries increased by approximately 862,000 pounds. That is astonishing increase, and even more astonishing when you consider that that is only one year's exports.

In a report written for the then minister of agriculture, Mr. Olson, entitled "Canadian Agriculture in the Seventies", the report states on page 60 that through research government must attempt to anticipate international trade developments before they occur. The task force has also observed that there is insufficient forward-looking. Yet on July 30 the deputy minister of transport stated:

Many of the conclusions are based on propositions which however well founded in theory are still hypothetical.

● (2200)

So here you have one department saying there is not sufficient forward-looking, and another department saying, "Sorry; we cannot help you because you are looking forward." I would suggest that the deputy minister take the suggestion of the Department of Agriculture and look forward. If he were to do that, maybe our other transportation problems could be straightened out. He also states that the Calgary airport, with its updated facilities, will cater to cargo needs allied to the Lethbridge region for some years to come. This statement does not take cognizance of the government of Alberta developing markets in the Pacific rim countries for protein and, in particular, beef products. The Calgary airport cannot possibly serve the needs of the southern Alberta cattle industry, considering it would require surface transportation hauls which would reduce the shelf-life of the product. Last year, packing plants in the city of Lethbridge slaughtered 29 per cent of all cattle slaughtered in Alberta and 11.5 per cent of all cattle slaughtered in Canada. The whole problem of marketing in relation to the flow of animals from

[Mr. Guay (Lévis).]

pasture through the feedlots to the packing houses would be hindered.

The facilities of the Calgary airport will not assist the growth and development of southern Alberta. I thought it was the policy of the Government of Canada to assist the decentralization of growth from larger metropolitan centres to communities the size of Lethbridge which show a potential for growth. At the now famous Western Economic Opportunities Conference held in Calgary, the federal government stated it was anxious to see air transportation developed still further. Then on the other hand it states, "No, this study is purely hypothetical." I might add that it is not. This type of double-dealing cannot but do its share of damage to the people's sense of faith and trust in the political system.

With Japan desiring to increase the nutritional levels of its people and to stimulate domestic beef production, this will no doubt create a growing demand for products from southern Alberta. The long distances involved and problems such as perishability and weight loss in the shipment of cattle will create real opportunities for airlifting produce to world markets. Thus, airlifting facilities right in the heart of the livestock industry will reduce the per unit cost of the air movement of goods and a whole new range of lower value goods will be transported by air.

The largest aircraft that runway 05-23 can accommodate at present under full payload is the Boeing 737, which has only short to medium range flying capability. This runway cannot handle the bigger long range aircraft required to serve distant markets such as Pacific rim countries. The federal government is in the process of building a \$1.5 million agricultural research station near Lethbridge. It has spent millions of dollars in DREE grants for processing industries. This government and the provincial government have spent tens of millions of dollars on new irrigation methods in southern Alberta. The investments of Canadians and Albertans cannot be maximized unless there are proper means of transportation and facilities which will make these investments pay off.

The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan), the Minister of Transport, and the Deputy Minister of Transport all say we need more proof, more evidence and more documented facts before they will do anything for the Lethbridge airport. If this is the case, there is no need for the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce. This department does not sit back and wait for things to happen. Instead, it goes out and develops trade. It hunts down trade when it knows it has a product to sell. When the LIP program was established, the government knew there was unemployment so it set aside millions of dollars and said, "If you want to work, we will help you."

I will give the federal government credit, Mr. Speaker, for having the foresight to see the potential for growth in the Lethbridge constituency. They realized that the largest cattle feeding operations in Canada are located in the Lethbridge constituency. They realized that Lethbridge could be a real boom district, with the right investment. With the investments of the federal government and the province of Alberta, Lethbridge is on its way to fantastic expansion.