

There has been a reduction in milk subsidies and a reduction in the premium paid to hog producers in Canada. This has an effect on the economy, and it affects my own area as well as the province of Quebec more particularly than western provinces.

Let me go on record here in the House of Commons, as I have in other places, by saying that I am absolutely against such policies by this government. It is inconceivable to me that these things should be cut when other sectors of our economy are getting more and more all the time and when the farmer is paying his share in order that these other people in our economy get what is rightfully theirs. It is not fair that the agricultural industry has to take the brunt of this situation by continually paying more and, in many instances, receiving less and less.

This afternoon we are dealing with a motion put forward by the leader of the New Democratic Party regarding the grain situation or, as he put it, the critical cash position of the farmers in western Canada. Along with other members of the agriculture committee, I was in the west a few weeks ago. At that time I had the opportunity as an easterner, for the first time, to see exactly how the farmers of western Canada carry on their everyday business.

While we saw conditions in Alberta and Manitoba, and we were in each of the provinces for at least two days, it was in the province of Saskatchewan that we really saw the situation of the ordinary farmer, and the problems he is up against. The committee was divided into a number of groups. I was paired with a Conservative member. The members of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool took us from farm to farm. We saw many farms each day. These farmers opened their books to us and we saw their financial circumstances. The financial circumstances I saw were not at all good.

The first farm we went to had about 40,000 bushels of wheat left on hand. The farmer had wheat left which was 2½ years old. He had not sold his crop from two years ago, nor had he sold last year's crop. He told us, and I believe truthfully, that he was absolutely up against it because he had used up all his credit and did not have any money left. He said he had enough money for seed grain and gasoline to put in this year's crop but did not know what he was going to do with it when he harvested it this fall. He had no idea what was to happen.

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Alleged Failure to Aid Western Farmers

Similar situations were revealed to us by other farmers. Is this the farmer's fault? Can we expect the wheat farmers in western Canada to act the same as other farmers in Canada who have other products such as milk, beef, tobacco and so forth? The answer is no, we cannot expect them to handle their crops in the same way, because much of our wheat crop in Canada must be exported. It is inconceivable to me, or anyone else for that matter, that the little farmer in Saskatchewan, Alberta, or Manitoba can sell his wheat to China, Cuba, Hungary, England or wherever it may be. Obviously, he must have somebody to dispose of the wheat for him. I understand that for this reason the Canadian Wheat Board came into being many years ago. Because of what I have learned from the farmers of western Canada, the politicians of western Canada who represent them, and the Wheat Board officials who appeared before us on at least two occasions, I regard the members of the Wheat Board as very sincere men who are doing their best for the wheat and grain farmers of western Canada. I think that within reason they have been very successful.

• (5:40 p.m.)

There are on the Wheat Board some very fine men. Mr. McNamara, the chairman of the board, answers questions in a very intelligent way. I do not agree with some of the answers he gives, but nevertheless he has in a most co-operative way tried to describe to us the policy of the Wheat Board and the government of Canada and what we are doing to help the western Canadian farmer.

I mention the Wheat Board, Mr. Speaker, because if it is not the fault of the little farmer in Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba that he cannot dispose of his grain to a foreign agent, and obviously he cannot by himself, whose fault is it? I say with all due respect to the powers that be in this country that it is either the fault of the Canadian Wheat Board, which represents the farmers, or of the government which appointed the Wheat Board in the first place.

If I may digress for a moment, Mr. Speaker, I would inform the house that I read in the financial pages of one of today's newspapers that there had been a new appointment to the Wheat Board, namely, the president of the Saskatchewan wheat pool. I understand that this gentleman is a farmer with undoubted ability. I hope he will be able to instil new ideas and life into that board so we may dispose of the surplus we have on hand at the present time.