

The Address—Mr. Althouse

● (1620)

I think that has been the total problem with the energy and agricultural sectors of western Canada. They were almost too technically efficient to survive a downturn in the economy. I see the Prime Minister has decided to set up a bunch of new committees aimed at bringing us to the year 2000. There will be a national advisory board for industrial technology. There will be a federal science and technology strategy and a committee to advise on that. We will even have a Canadian space agency and an Atlantic Canada opportunities agency. Yet, here we are in western Canada sitting on some of the most up to date technology and watching it go down the tube because the market-place will not sustain that kind of technology any longer.

The technology which has been put into place is largely energy dependent, in agriculture at least. When I look at the energy sector, I think that could be said for its technology as well. We moved people off the farms to specialize in being machinists, welders, fertilizer and fuel manufacturers, and distributors; to provide us with research into chemicals and feeds; and to provide specialists to give us advice on how to use these products. We trained veterinarians and technicians to provide egg transplants for livestock so that we could use only top producing males and females. The foetuses were put into less productive cattle so that when they hit the ground they were top quality cattle. All of this required a lot of training.

The technology used for the production of crops and livestock requires a lot of energy and it requires a lot of energy to produce chemical fertilizers. The nitrogen portion of most fertilizers in western Canada comes from the natural gas industry. As well our chemicals come from the petroleum and gas industries.

Let us look at the agricultural technology which we in North America use and compare it with the technology being used elsewhere. We see some great variances in where priorities have been placed. With our high energy agriculture, we turn out a great deal of product per man. The man or woman on the farm, the so-called producers, can chalk up thousands and thousands of tonnes of produce for their efforts with their huge tractors and chemical fertilizers. Great amounts of energy are used by these huge machines. When we compare that kind of agriculture which appears to be producing surpluses with the kind of ongoing agriculture in Asia, we see a completely different approach. Such countries have concentrated upon looking for better cultivars, plants, seeds, better ways of combining those plants and seeds, and for creating a better environment with water and heat and by changing the soil. They put a lot of individual energy into agriculture; they expend a lot of human energy. When we take away the advantage we get from petroleum being put into agriculture and put it down to what is produced by individual farmers, we find that farmers in countries such as China and India are more efficient on a per person basis than we are. If we take away energy input, they are producing more product than we are. Because they have taken this approach, it is probably no

surprise that India is now exporting wheat. China is self-sufficient and will be a competitor in wheat. In fact it has been exporting rice for years. Its first wheat imports from Canada were financed by rice exports to southeastern Asiatic countries.

I do not see any move in all the committees the Prime Minister will set up to expand the biotechnology to which we will have to adapt if in fact we are to become free traders in the sense of the recent free trade talks. We will have to find ways to make plants produce more without relying upon expensive energy. We will have to look at genetic improvements and at finding ways of using the earth, sun, and man's intellect to achieve that kind of production. The vision which the Prime Minister has given us of agriculture in expanding the country has missed that point entirely.

I see Mr. Speaker signalling that my time is coming to an end. As I said at the beginning of my speech, we seem to have heard an alphabetical kind of Speech from the Throne. If we revert to another area where the alphabet was used in our educational experience in school, I do not think I could give the Speech from the Throne an A; I think it is somewhere around an E.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, in his speech the Hon. Member was very complimentary to the Government in that we put agriculture very high on the agenda of international meetings and that the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) took the time to go to Alberta to meet with farm groups. Also my colleague was very complimentary about the \$5 billion wheat deal signed this week, and he made reference to the \$1 billion assistance for farmers announced by the Prime Minister today. However, I am concerned that he suggested there was some confusion in the office of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise). I wonder whether he would give us the name of the person to whom he talked who was so confused so that we can follow it up.

Mr. Althouse: Mr. Speaker, I do not have the name of the person. It was the Minister's assistant in his parliamentary office. The improvements which the Hon. Member cited are—

Mr. Lewis: Laudatory.

Mr. Althouse: They would be laudatory if they produced results. When the cheques are in the farmers' hands, perhaps they will begin to have an opportunity to produce results. I caution the House and the Hon. Member for Simcoe North (Mr. Lewis) that simply moving to have agriculture put on the agenda at the multilateral talks is not a particular victory. The subject has been discussed at previous multilateral talks. The general disposition of most countries involved in GATT is not to attempt to do anything about subsidies for agriculture because it is too close to home.

● (1630)

As a legacy of World War II and the pre-war period a great many countries suffered physically, resulting in starvation through a lack of food. Most voters remembering those days