

Prairie Grain Stabilization Act

and Saskatchewan particularly, a few corporate farm units run in the same way as any other huge business, with an eye to the profit margin and efficiency. There is no concern about the human element or what will happen to the operators of small farms as well as other people who live in rural areas. What does this government have in mind for them? It seems it has nothing in mind at all except the welfare rolls and the unemployment cheques being delivered in large Canadian cities today.

These are a few of the long-range ramifications of these agricultural programs unless we have action right now in respect of rural Canada and the whole agricultural picture as it is in the west. I think the rural way of life is worth preserving. I think there is a certain quality to it. Instead of pushing people into larger cities we should be talking about repopulating, stimulating the agricultural economy and making the rural life viable. I understand the average age of farmers in western Canada is 57 years. This in itself once again underlines the fact that this industry is dying rapidly. This is another point which proves that we are not really just talking to ourselves when we say this is an industry in a tremendous amount of trouble.

I want to suggest to the government, and to all members in this House, that we should make agricultural problems a top priority. We should draft a bill to put \$250 million immediately into the hands of farmers. Let us give them \$250 million as some farm organizations are requesting. This is what the people who know about farming recommend. This is not what is being said by government bureaucrats or directors of corporations, but the farmers themselves. This is what is needed.

I think in the long range we must make some very important decisions, and I should like to suggest three that come to mind at this time. First, the government must make the fundamental decision that rural life is worth while. I believe it should not only be preserved but helped and stimulated in every way possible. I think urbanization is taking place much too rapidly in Canada, and in an impersonal way. The basic and fundamental decision which must be made is that rural life in this country must be helped. Farmers must be helped, and if we are going to do anything at all we must first make this fundamental decision. Secondly, if rural life is to be worth while, the farmers must make some of the decisions that effect him and his life. There is no reason that the farmer should not participate in these decisions. Farmers should be involved in agricultural decision-making process. Why are they not consulted in a really meaningful way? Why can farmers not have some say in respect of the prices they receive for their commodities? Why can the farmers not have a say as to what they should pay for tractors and other implements necessary to the production of grain? Many other sectors of our society have this power.

Perhaps to the minister of the government, this sounds like a revolutionary or new idea. I do not think the minister is ready to let the farmer have this type of authority over his own destiny. We could get involved in

[Mr. Nystrom.]

a discussion about Bill C-176, but I will leave that for later. Under that bill, why not give the producer control over what is going to happen in his own area of concern and endeavour? These are things we must do in the future if we want to do something really significant to help the western farmer and rural life.

Finally, if we really want to do something about helping the farmer and western rural communities, the government and the people in this country must decide they are going to support agriculture in a really meaningful way. The government must finally, some time, do something to support agricultural prices. The price of a bushel of grain is probably lower now, or no higher than it was at the end of the Second World War. This should not be the case. This is about the only country in the industrialized world which does not support our wheat prices in some way when it comes to trading on the international market.

Once again I should like to refer to a statement by the Federation of Agriculture about the price of grain. There is a reference to the two-price system, with which this government has flirted for several years but has never done anything in a serious way to implement. The statement by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture reads in part:

Finally, an adequate two-price system must be made a part of the total policy package with respect to income protection for western grain growers. It is just not right that we should be the only, or virtually only, wheat producing nation that accepts world price levels as an adequate guide to prices that should fairly be paid in the marketplace by domestic consumers. It is a shocking fact that in the entire post-war period since the second world war there has been essentially no increase in grain prices and therefore no increase whatever in the amount the farmers receive from flour and cereal products sold to the consumer. This must be corrected by substantial increases in the price received by the farmer for grain used for domestic human consumption. The impact on the consumer would in any case be very small. The great bulk of the cost of cereal products to the consumer is transportation, processing and distribution.

I suggest that the time has come when the government should take organizations such as the Federation of Agriculture, the farmers' union, the wheat pool and others very seriously when they talk about policies with regard to farm income. It is about time the farmers themselves had a real and meaningful voice in determining the policy under which they will live. It is about time this government placed a high enough priority on agriculture that we put our money where our mouths are and supported the price of agricultural commodities. We can do many things to increase the incomes of farmers. We can do many other things, for instance, along the line suggested by the Barber commission concerning farm machinery. There is no reason farm machines should cost so much or that profits should be so excessive. We could do something immediately to bring down the price of farm machinery, and this will have to be done if we want to improve the farm income factor.

There are many other things I could add, some of which have already been mentioned by people such as the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Gleave) and the hon. member for Battleford-Kindersley (Mr. Thom-