

[English]

## VACANCY

ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF CARDIGAN

**Mr. Tom McMillan (Hillsborough):** Madam Speaker, if now is the time to do so, I hereby give notice, pursuant to section 10 of the House of Commons Act, that a vacancy has occurred in the representation of the House of Commons for the electoral district of Cardigan in the province of Prince Edward Island by reason of the untimely death of the Hon. Daniel J. MacDonald, the member for that district.

[Translation]

**Madam Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 54, I do now leave the chair for the House to go into Committee of the Whole.

● (1600)

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

APPROPRIATION ACT NO. 2, 1980-81

The House resumed, from Tuesday, December 9, consideration in committee of Bill C-47, for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the Government of Canada for the financial year ending March 31, 1981—Mr. Pinard—Mr. Blaker in the chair.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Vote No. 1

**The Assistant Deputy Chairman:** I understand that the hon. member for Waterloo had the floor when debate in Committee of the Whole on Bill C-47 was concluded yesterday. I believe I am correct in indicating that the hon. member did not utilize the whole time he was allowed and that he has about ten minutes remaining. I will verify this in a moment.

I understand that the hon. member for Waterloo has now determined that he will not utilize the remainder of his time. Therefore, I will recognize an hon. member on my right. In this instance I understand the hon. member for Guelph will rise to speak.

**Mr. Schroder:** Mr. Chairman, I am grateful for the opportunity to address the House in Committee of the Whole while it is examining the estimates for Agriculture Canada. Of all the ministries of the Government of Canada, my constituency of Guelph is most intimately related to this one. At this point in time the people of Guelph are most concerned about the fate of the Canfarm Co-op. I will return to that subject in a moment, but first I would like to address myself to the broader relationship of agriculture to the nation at large and my own constituency.

### Supply

In the House of Commons, we frequently talk about the importance of small business, private enterprise, and the importance of enhancing the business climate for the over-all betterment of the Canadian economy. Agriculture, too, is a business in Canada subject to most of the same risks as an ordinary business, consuming large amounts of capital investment, large cash flows, and facing many difficult conditions that many Canadians fail to appreciate. Early in our history the taming of the wilderness and cultivation of the soil laid the foundation for the economic development of Canada. No civilization in history has ever attained any measure of social and industrial development without first having an advanced agricultural sector.

I represent the riding of Guelph which has a strong and vibrant industrial base, and a great university of which we are extremely proud. The international recognition and prestige that this institution enjoys is based primarily on its contribution to agricultural science. The Ontario Agricultural College, established in 1873, and the Ontario Veterinary College, established in 1862, along with the MacDonald Institute, were founding colleges of what is now the University of Guelph. The contributions of these colleges to the science of agriculture is beyond calculation. The husbandry of soil, crops and animals has been advanced to levels unsurpassed anywhere in the world by the applied research of the University of Guelph.

However, we should never forget that the successful application of this specialized knowledge falls on the shoulders of the farmers themselves. It is a national blessing that most provinces in Canada are able to provide strong support for the agricultural sector which provides Canada and the world with its food supply.

I have a strong personal interest in the role of agriculture in Canada in that I have made my living for more than three decades as a professional veterinarian. Most Canadians fail to make the connection between such areas as animal pathology, which was my field, grain transportation, hog prices, an assortment of other agriculture-related areas, and the food on their dinner tables, and the cost of providing it.

Canadians still enjoy the lowest food prices in the world as a proportion of their income. Yet, this is possible because of two factors and two factors only. They are, first, an accident of birth and geography which finds us living within one of the biggest and most fertile agricultural zones in the world, and second, the amazing strides that the farming and agricultural community has made in exploiting these advantages. Canada has never had fewer farmers as a percentage of its population than it has today, yet they produce more in absolute and per capita terms than ever before.

At one point in time it would not have been necessary for a member of Parliament to stand up in public and argue the case for the Canadian farmer to ensure that he receives his due. Before World War II, about one-third of the population was classified as rural. Now the urban population has climbed to a staggering 95 per cent of all Canadians. The farmer is now a smaller minority but he continues to maintain this land as the