

*Cost of Living*

When agricultural output increases by \$1,000, total economic output rises by \$3,000. When you calculate new income and new output on top of that, the total economic impact is \$5,000. The healthier, stronger and more competitive the agricultural economy gets, the better it is for the nation. But it must be realized that when production costs go up by 13 per cent over the previous year, then the farmer is not to blame when the prices of the products he sells increase.

This government has, therefore, taken steps to assist farmers and help consumers at the same time. The opposition asks what we have done. Last night, Mr. Speaker, the crop insurance bill went through this House. That was just a small thing to help stabilize the income of farmers and provide some extra protection, working closely with the provinces. The opposition asks why we do not bring in more legislation. Well, that bill, with the explanatory notes, was only two pages long but look at the time it took to get it through. By means of the bill we pay half the premiums, which amounted to nearly \$15 million this year because many farmers did buy the extra crop insurance. Members opposite were not interested in crop insurance last night when the bill was before us; they were only interested in trying to downgrade the Minister of Agriculture. But, Mr. Speaker, a lot of farmers think he is trying to do a good job.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**An hon. Member:** Just keep blowing your own horn!

**Mr. Whelan:** Some of them did not even talk about crop insurance but talked about the Minister of Agriculture. If they wanted to show their sincerity, why did they not pass the bill quickly and say "Mr. Minister, bring in all kinds of legislation and we will pass it right away"?

• (1730)

The record shows what this government has done. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) stated how we had reduced income taxes as a way of stopping inflation. We have wiped out the capital gains tax on family farms passed on from one generation to the next. No other nation in the world has done that. There may be some members on the opposite side who honestly and sincerely supported that measure. However, they knew it would have been very bad politics not to have supported it. This Minister of Agriculture can take a little credit for that.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Whelan:** For many years before coming here I worked with farmers for no pay whatever. I sacrificed my farm to come here and work for them. Canada is one of the greatest countries in the world. It lets a peasant come here to work for his fellow peasants.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Whelan:** If we had full co-operation from the opposition we could do an even better job for the producers of this country than we are doing at the present time. We have increased the old age pension and veterans allowances. We have proposed a complete overhaul of our social

[Mr. Whelan.]

security system, including major increases in the family allowance.

We can compare time limits. Members know how quickly they acted on veterans affairs legislation. They realized this group was more powerful and more organized. When it came to the farm bill, they said they did not care, it was not important. The hon. member for Annapolis Valley (Mr. Nowlan) said it was not an important bill. He criticized the minister in charge of the Wheat Board (Mr. Lang) because he did not know Annapolis is a great agriculture area. Last night the hon. member did not even know how to pick mushrooms.

**Mr. Nowlan:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am certainly not going to repeat the interesting debate of yesterday. I confess I do not know how to pick mushrooms, but I certainly know a ripe tomato that is ready to fall, and I think the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) fits into that category.

**Mr. Whelan:** All I can say is that I know you can make good cider when there is a windfall of apples. However, the hon. member said he does not know about the production of mushrooms. But what he has said here tonight grows mushrooms. It is called biomass material.

We have enabled this country to set three grain export records in a row and are shooting for another this year. We have been able to introduce quota freedoms of the kind that allow a farmer to grow what he wants, and sell it.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Whelan:** We reduced freight rates on rapeseed. We bought 2,000 hopper cars. This has helped us set one transportation record after another at Vancouver and Thunder Bay. We have assisted the provinces in crop disaster areas. We raised the compensation for diseased cattle in this country. That was done before any representations were made.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Whelan:** We are in the midst of one of the most thorough and open examinations we have ever had in Canada of our entire grain handling and transportation system. I do not think any other nation in the world has done this. We are implementing an interim feed grains policy and have put forward proposals for a permanent one to be effective August 1, 1974. This is a completely revamped national feed grains policy, one that will open new opportunities for farmers in the east and in the west. It will allow meat production to develop in areas of natural advantage which in turn will increase production on a competitive basis.

We have introduced a small farm development program and eight out of the ten provinces now have operational programs under agreement with us. When we first brought out this plan, there was a lot of political noise and flak from the provincial leaders, but they have since seen the wisdom of our policy and have teamed up with the federal government to help us develop profitable family farms from coast to coast. We have called one of the most advanced meetings ever and I will be making a presentation to the provincial ministers of agriculture.