

Agricultural Policies

the international market. When it talks of supply-management it is talking about restricted, regimented and directed Canadian farming. Formerly, such a policy was unheard of in Canada. Farmers were free agents. They ran their own businesses and, rightly or wrongly, made their own decisions. This government feels that farmers are no longer capable of making those decisions and that those decisions must be made for them. That is the basis of the legislation we are considering today, and that is not right. In a day and age when we import almost \$1 billion worth of foodstuffs a year, the government talks of restricted farming.

• (12:30 p.m.)

If we had an additional \$1 billion market for our farm products, we would not have this economic trouble today. An additional \$1 billion worth of trade would be a means of survival for the Canadian industry. The government talks about restricted trade, restricted production and supply management. What are their solutions to these problems? The government says we should have this policy. We should not have as many farmers as we now have. There should be a policy whereby the farmers can be painlessly removed from farming. What an easy solution for the agricultural problems today! Take the farmers out of farming and the problems will disappear.

The world is going to need more food than in the past, especially proteins. Although Canada can produce an abundance of proteins, this government wishes to take the farmers off the farms and put them into the already large and sprawling cities. They will become welfare cases. The government talks about retraining. The average age of the Canadian farmer is in the late forties or early fifties. Are these the people we are going to retrain? Are we going to give them jobs at a time when we are suffering from our highest unemployment? It is ridiculous!

We in the official opposition not only support the principle of the motion before the House today, but we endorse it. I hope that after nearly seven years, one member from the government side will come forward with even one idea as to how the agriculture industry might be served by the present government. If that is done, Mr. Speaker, it will be a first for this government.

[Translation]

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, I was quite pleased when I had a [Mr. Danforth.]

look at the motion put this morning because it states a realistic view. It says that the agricultural economy of the country is depressed and I agree with that. Indeed, this is not the complete picture. One has only to travel a bit throughout the country to realize that farmers are also depressed, not because they are unable to make their farm produce or to better manage their herd, but because, on the one hand, the production costs are constantly increasing and, on the other hand, the net income is decreasing year after year.

Mr. Speaker, businessmen in our rural areas who are used to doing business with farmers also suffer from those conditions, because the farmers are unable to buy the materials necessary to the maintenance of their farm buildings. Consequently, businessmen are worried when they see the local industry losing ground like that.

Another factor that is responsible for the considerable increase of farm production costs is the steady increase of farm implement prices. The price of spare parts keeps increasing also, but we are hoping that following the Barber report the government will take the necessary measures allowing farmers to obtain farm machinery and spare parts at a decent price.

In the province of Quebec, there is a basic industry, namely the dairy industry. I would like to speak briefly on it because demonstrations are still taking place in that province. Farmers are not that happy with the government dairy policy for the dairy year 1970-71, neither were they indeed with the policy for the year 1969-70.

Mr. Speaker, more than 80 per cent of Quebec farmers are milk or cream producers, and more than 60 per cent of their income comes from the sale of dairy products or livestock of the dairy type, and so on. That production is truly consistent with the natural avocation of our farm community and its progress reflects the unquestionable ability of a great number of our farmers in this field. The dairy policy is therefore of utmost importance for the province of Quebec, and until very recently, I was really confident that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) would agree to some changes in the dairy policy. But after his visit to Richmond, I am a little more pessimistic. However, I still ask in the name of industrial milk producers that the dairy policy for 1970-71 be reconsidered and improved so that farmers who are really engaged in dairy production, those who are