

*Employment Support Bill*

and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) has heard that barley, oats and wheat coming within the Wheat Board area in western Canada are specifically exempted from the provisions of the act. Wheat, of course, is not affected by the import surcharge but oats and barley are affected and these are two important crops in western Canada.

Further, when we take a look at the operations of the Agricultural Stabilization Board in recent years we find that the level of support provided to some sectors of the agriculture industry and for some agricultural products is such that I believe it can be generally agreed that this machinery will be of very little value to farmers in Canada. I suggest the government is covering up, that it is doing very little to deal with agricultural problems arising out of the United States action. At any rate, it is clear they are not ready to provide any more money, at least up to the present time. This is typical of the government's attitude when it comes to agricultural problems.

We have seen the same thing when it comes to the transitional payments which the government is proposing in legislation now before the House of Commons. I do not intend to debate that subject at the present time but I wish to note that this is one example where the opposition parties have made it perfectly clear that if the government were prepared to separate that part of the bill from the other provisions of the legislation we would be prepared to give it immediate passage without further debate. The government was not prepared to do that. We have had further evidence in recent days through the failure of the government to make the payment to the Canadian Wheat Board which is required by law under the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act. We are not going to have adequate money for agriculture. The whole principle of the stabilization plan proposed in another bill is to limit the government's contribution and assistance to the agriculture industry. Contrast this with what the government is prepared to do for many other industries in Canada.

The viewpoint of some in western Canada was expressed by the Premier of Saskatchewan in a news release on September 8. Premier Allan Blakeney had this to say:

It would appear that the federal government has left the primary producers of Canada, particularly farmers, "out in the cold" once again. Although we haven't yet seen the legislation, indications are that the government has moved with great and commendable speed to provide \$80 million to protect manufacturers and processors from the effects of the U.S. economic measures. But apparently the government will do nothing of a similar nature for primary producers.

This is a disgraceful situation. When Ottawa floated the Canadian dollar, the farmer got hurt; whenever there are ups and downs in the world market situation, the other countries subsidize their agricultural producers while Canada's farmers are ignored by their government. Such would seem to be the case again.

If we are to give this legislation the type of examination that it requires, and if in fact we are to pass a sound judgment on the legislation, it is necessary to examine it within a broad policy framework. I suggest that no policy framework has been laid before the House. In his speech the other day the Minister of Industry, Trade and Com-

merce attempted to do his best to outline at this particular stage some of the "nuts and bolts" issues that are dealt with, but he did not deal with the broad framework within which the measure must be considered.

● (2:40 p.m.)

The Minister of Finance gave the House another of his reviews of the economic situation in Canada and said that everything is going to be all right, that things are going up and no one need worry at all. I suggest this simply is not good enough. The minister said that this measure is the first step in the government's program to deal with the situation. I suggest that this is an obvious patchwork solution, another of the many patchwork solutions that have been put forward by the government.

**Mr. Pepin:** You said that before.

**Mr. Burton:** Both the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, who I am glad is listening, said that the government is considering other measures, but we have been given no information about such measures at this time. I can understand that it may have good reason for not wanting to tip its entire hand, and I do not quarrel with that at all, but no information has been given to the House about the policy framework of the government or the priorities which the government must establish if it is to deal with this and other economic problems in Canada.

I think this point was made very well yesterday in the speech of the hon. member for Duvernay (Mr. Kierans). He pointed to the need for national objectives on the part of the government and for a framework within which policy can subsequently be developed. I suggest that the needs of the nation as a whole should be given higher priority. We should ensure that this nation has a high degree of independence and can carry on its own affairs and make its own decisions, rather than be totally dependent on one or more foreign countries, however good neighbours they may be.

A number of suggestions have been made during this debate in regard to steps the government might take to deal with the present situation. A number were proposed by my leader the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis), my colleague the hon. member for Waterloo (Mr. Saltsman) and others. The government should be implementing a number of measures now, one of the most important of which is to lower interest rates in Canada.

Such a step would have an obvious impact on exchange rates in this country and I suggest would be of more assistance than all the give-away grants that the government could possibly make. At the same time we could continue our floating exchange rate policy with which, as the minister knows, the members of this party basically agree. I suggest that not only would the manufacturing industries covered by this bill be assisted, but so would agriculture, the fisheries and the economy of Canada in general. Certainly, it would be better than the Bank of Canada simply taking holding action in exchange transaction, which it is undoubtedly now doing in order to try and stabilize the situation.

[Mr. Burton.]