

Farm Income

suffering. I have already noted the depressed prices producers receive for cattle. Part of the reason is the government's decision to raise this year's quota for imported beef another two million pounds over last year. I am going to repeat that, Mr. Speaker. Part of the reason is the government's decision to raise this year's quota for imported beef another two million pounds over last year. The market has been flooded by low grade beef from Australia and New Zealand that depresses prices across the board. The government is beginning to recognize that high tariff walls are necessary to protect and develop some of our more vulnerable manufacturing industries.

The motion moved today is in five parts, Mr. Speaker, and in twenty minutes I cannot address myself to each part although I agree with the motion in general.

We have a very real problem in this country. As I said earlier, people who live in the cities are paying very high prices for food produced in this country while farm incomes are away down and are going to be down again next year.

Let us look at some of the other human aspects of farming today apart from the statistics, which are bad enough and should clinch the argument if anybody from the government side wishes to refute what I have said. Let us consider the problem of the young farmer who takes a mortgage from the local bank. I talked to a tobacco farmer about two years ago who told me—and I am sure he was not lying—that the interest alone on his mortgage was \$12,000 per year. As we all know, tobacco farmers are not making the money they did in the fifties. This is also true of fruit and vegetable growers. In fact, this is true of farming in general. For a young person to buy out a family farm, he has to get into such tremendous debt spread over so many years, and will receive so little for his labour and investment, that it will take him years to catch up, if in fact, he ever does.

Another problem which is not general across the country but affects fruit and vegetable growers and tobacco producers is labour—hired help. There are arguments on both sides. If a person drawing unemployment insurance knows he is going to be called back to work, for him to go through all the red tape of the UIC after he has a temporary job and then get back on UIC until he is called back, he would rather say to himself: "What is the point in going through all that red tape if I am going to be called back to work in three weeks?" There is something wrong there.

● (1542)

Some farmers in my riding have voiced their criticism to me about our local people—Canadians—young as well as middle-aged. To some extent their criticism is justified. Manpower often sends out people who want to go out for the day, have two square meals and then take off. That is not the general picture. A lot of the young people in my constituency, and I am talking about the fruit and vegetable growers, the tobacco growers and so on, put in a pretty good day's work. But not only do farmers have a problem of weather; they have the problem of acquiring good people at the right time.

[Mr. Blackburn.]

In most of these cases I have cited we are talking about planting, which is usually done in late May, and harvesting, which is usually done August through to September. I agree it is difficult for some farmers, particularly the small growers, to keep a man or woman on the payroll from early May to late September or early October. That is one of the reasons it is difficult to employ local farm help.

In view of the facts which I have stated today, why are we cutting down on offshore labour from the Caribbean? We have over one million people registered as being out of work. I know that I am treading on very thin ice here. I know that some of the farmers in the particular fields which I have just referred to prefer offshore labour. I also know that many of them prefer to hire local people, so we have to keep in mind this balance. It seems impossible to hire enough good local people who will work for decent wages. I am not talking about somebody who wants to get away with \$2.75 an hour without room and board; I am talking about a lot of farmers who are prepared to pay \$3.50 or \$4 an hour with room and board or those who are willing to provide meals and transportation back and forth from, say, Brantford to the rural areas. These people are getting fed up with the government's manpower program, the agricultural offshore labour pool, or whatever it is called. They are fed up with the tightening up of the rules and regulations in this regard. On the other hand, I can understand the problem the government faces when it has allowed unemployment to reach one million—the official figure—in this country. I do not think there is any basic dispute if you are talking about the underemployed and people who are off the lists. Taking these into account the total would perhaps be one and a half million Canadians.

I end on this note, Mr. Speaker. I have worked as hard as I can to assist farmers in my riding, and the minister knows because I have sent him many letters. I am not trying to say that they are a special group. They do not want to be looked upon as a special group in our society; they want a fair share from their labour and their investment. At the same time, if they make a profit and they have money they will spend their money. That will then create jobs in the farm implement business, whether in Massey-Ferguson—and I am not any great lover of the Argus Corporation—or White Farm. I do not care which company it is or what that company produces in the way of machinery or other goods for farmers, it works both ways. If farmers are receiving a decent income then the workers in the plants who produce goods for farmers will also receive a decent income. Not only that, but they will retain their jobs.

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise to speak on the motion put forward by the hon. member for Elgin (Mr. Wise). Since most of the issues he has raised have been mentioned by me at some length in many of the speeches I have delivered during the past year, I would have thought there would have been some effort amongst the more literate members of the opposition to acquaint themselves with the content of the speeches made by myself and representatives of the Department of Agriculture.