

Island and Ontario are told that the frost will destroy their crops, it is wrong to expect the province to pick up the tab, or at least half of it. If the potato growers or wheat growers are told that they are worth only \$400 to the government of Canada, then we are writing them off. Until such time as the Minister of Agriculture starts to face some of the realities involved in financing and marketing agricultural products, with the necessity for making a profit, he is not doing his job any better than his predecessor, and as far as the farmer is concerned will be replaced at the next election.

[Translation]

**Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse):** Mr. Chairman, first I would like to congratulate the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) for his appointment. I am convinced that he is a sincere man because I have had the opportunity of sitting with him on the committee on agriculture for several years where he gave proof of his objectivity and sincerity. Now that he is a minister, he holds the reins of power and if he does not succeed in getting Parliament to pass the required measures in order to increase the stability and viability of agriculture, this will once more show that there is a secret power which is acting on our best ministers. Anyway, I hope that in the near future justice will be done in the area of agriculture, both in western and eastern Canada.

• (2110)

Mr. Chairman, with Bill C-141 the government is asking the House to vote supplementary estimates of approximately \$16 million required by the Department of Agriculture to close this fiscal year.

As it has been often said, agriculture is the most important industry of our country. Because thousands of people depend on it as their main source of income, this industry, which is at the same time the most vulnerable one, must be able to rely on government support to reach a certain degree of stability. We are not begging for charity, we are asking for fairness considering that the government does interfere in many other areas of the economy with all kinds of grants to ensure the viability and the survival of some industries, which we agree about.

When farmers request assistance from the government, we should not be looked upon as never-satisfied beggars. Indeed, this industry provides thousands of jobs, not on farms only, but also in the areas of transportation, processing, wholesale and retail distribution. Thousands of people are dependent on it. This is the industry where production per worker is most effective.

I was pleased to hear the minister point out that our farmers during the last couple of years have increased individual productivity to a surprising level which exceeds that of any other industry.

However, there are various factors to be considered for the industry to be profitable and to provide for those involved in it incomes at least equal to those of workers in other industries.

Agriculture is a combination of several activities: grain production, dairy production, hog and poultry production. Farming is becoming an increasingly specialized industry and in each field the availability of labour is an important

### Supply

factor. However, there is concern now, particularly in dairy production, about the shortage of labour.

I should like to quote at this stage part of a speech delivered by the second Vice-President of the Dairy Producers Association of the province of Quebec:

Therefore, working out a policy for farm labour is a matter of great concern for dairy producers. As they are practically up to their ears in work seven days a week, they are of course keenly aware of the problem.

They are more or less like politicians: we also are at it seven days a week—and still we cannot keep up with our work.

I continue to quote:

Also, programs concerning dairy quality and control are of particular concern to producers.

I stress this point because the bill now before us includes a special chapter on labour.

Not only does it require a considerable time investment, but dairy production also demands special attention and abilities.

Certainly, the first passer-by that comes around cannot be entrusted with the responsibility of looking after a dairy herd. It is becoming increasingly important for people who are involved in this activity to be qualified so that production costs are reduced as much as possible to allow for a wider profit margin for the producer without overburdening the consumer.

I quote further.

... This is essential for the proper management of a herd and the requirements in this connection are increasing.

Now, we can no longer rely on the zeal of the producer, of his sons or of his employees for the basic survival of the dairy industry. Today, the salaries must correspond to the qualifications required from the worker. The working hours should correspond reasonably to those prevailing in other sectors and, consequently, most urgent measures and special programs should be adopted to encourage the training of competent and adequate labour.

In the job training programs, the government should give more specific attention to the training of competent labour able to meet the producers' requirements in the field of the dairy industry.

Further on, the second vice-president added in his remarks:

... during the national convention of dairy producers spoke on this question to confirm the current uneasiness of labour ... the former UCC has already fought to have labour protected by unemployment insurance and there was no question of giving up what already exists. In reply to a spokesman for the Ontario producers who were wondering about the advisability of maintaining the current system, the vice-president ... stated that contributions were not paid for nothing and that we should instead try to improve the existing laws.

This is evidence from the manager of a fairly considerable dairy business, and who, at the same time, has become one of the major official of this association. This evidence may be considered as worthwhile and the required measures should be taken to prevent this problem from aggravating so that this industry may survive and continue to provide our Canadian consumers with a sufficient amount of dairy products.

Another important area also connected with agriculture is the operation of maple tree groves. This issue has often been raised in this House. My colleague, the hon. member