

I think this is one of the most worth-while programs there is. If they can find a cure for this disease, it will be a tremendous breakthrough. I just don't have the funds.

Mr. Mazankowski: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman. The Minister of Agriculture referred to me in his comment. I want to point out to him that one of the reasons the province of Alberta has a heritage trust fund is because it exercises prudent financial management. If the government of which the Minister of Agriculture is a member would exercise such tight fiscal managerial controls over the funds entrusted to them, they would probably have some money to spend on some of the programs to which my colleague is referring.

The Chairman: The hon. member has hardly made a point of order.

• (2230)

Mr. Gurbin: I should like to follow the questions put forward by my colleague and try to spend more time on research and development. I will make my questions short so as to get short answers as well and perhaps cover some of the relationships between agriculture and energy. It is an increasingly important area. If the minister and his department understand this area they certainly do not seem to have been very successful in bringing forward solutions for some of the problems which are developing. From some of the answers given here, the minister seemed to indicate he felt that Agriculture Canada was indeed putting what it should into research and development. However, his own research and development branch, particularly on the basis of the comments they made in front of the alternative energy committee, is well aware their efforts are very much less than they should be. They are now getting \$1.5 million to do all the research and development for energy related to agriculture for the whole country in an area where the federal government clearly should be taking leadership. Even to do the basic minimum they would need about \$9 million in about 30 man-years. Would the minister comment as to whether he feels that is an appropriate level of funding and of man-years?

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Chairman, the hon. member mentions a figure. As early as 1974, Agriculture Canada began funding research on alternative energy for agriculture. The funds invested in contract research are now \$4 million. We know that research is very important. Some of our own people point out that for every dollar invested in research a \$9-return is received. We have funded over 50 per cent of all research done in Canada. Let us not forget about the amount of money we give to universities. When I first came to Ottawa we gave \$26 million to the higher schools of learnings. Last year we gave well over \$2 billion to the higher schools of learning and they are doing a lot of research in agriculture. We are paying 50 per cent of all administration costs in universities out of federal taxation moneys. Even the school where the hon. member received his medical education benefits; it cost us \$250,000 to put him through school. That is not done for very many young farmers in any fashion or form. The veterinarians

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who go through school are funded by this tremendous amount of money and we are accused of being the bad financiers of the country and the mismanagers of the economy. Alberta takes 45 per cent of the revenue from the resources from under the ground and we did not contribute anything to them, we just happened to be living on top of them. If that is good management then I would like to be part of that good management. Perhaps then I could look after some of those things they want me to spend more money on such as research. I do not have the resources to draw from. It has very little to do with good management as the hon. member for Vegreville said. They do not know what to do with it. They do not know how to spread it around and make it grow.

Mr. Gurbin: Mr. Chairman, the minister has been very ably side-stepping my question. The point of the issue is that agriculture uses about 3 per cent of all of the total energy demand of the whole country. I am not asking him about Alberta or some other province managing its own resources or whether Quebec is looking after its hydroelectric power any better than Alberta is looking after its oil. I do not think that is relevant.

Will the minister provide some leadership at the national level to farmers who have problems with energy costs relating to the operation of their tractors and energy costs related to fertilizer costs. The National Energy Board tells us there is going to be an increase of \$4.5 per barrel of oil per year for the next three years. That equates a cost of production going from \$3.5 per acre up to about \$14 per acre depending on what farmers are growing.

The Canadian Federation of Agriculture came before us and presented a brief asking the federal government to provide some leadership. I am asking the minister to do three specific things and comment on whether he thinks they are appropriate for the government to do at the national level. One is to audit on-farm energy uses so that Agriculture Canada may tell farmers where they can save, where they can conserve and where they can implement proper oil substitution measures. The second is to make an on-farm assessment of what opportunities are available for different farmers to take advantage of alternate energy forms. There are many energy forms but I do not have an opportunity here today to talk about all of them. The minister is well aware of some of them. Even though he has not done anything as yet and even though Agriculture Canada has not replaced one drop of oil on farms for farmers who have to work their fields, there are many, many opportunities. They could be assessed, they could be described, and assistance could be given.

The final thing the minister could do would be to assist at government level to provide the co-operative framework for farmers to put in pilot projects on farms for things such as ethanol plants. Those are three of the things the Canadian Federation of Agriculture asked for. Will the minister tell us if he will help through Agriculture Canada to provide that kind of assistance?