

*Supply*

would also suggest that sometimes the minister, by reminiscing and taking a long time to answer, wastes our time as well.

**Mr. Knowles:** Mr. Chairman, may I say briefly that the system seemed to work fairly well during the last four days. Each member who gets the floor is allowed 20 minutes, and he has the right to use the full 20 minutes or he can speak briefly and leave time for questions. If the minister will be patient, I am sure he will have plenty of time to answer questions as the committee proceeds.

**The Assistant Deputy Chairman:** If there was a point of order in terms of an appeal to the Standing Orders, I do not think it is necessary to pursue the matter any further. In any event, I recognize that the minister has somewhat of a difficult point and that he might, by consultation with the members of his own party, be able to resolve that point with a shuffle in the time arrangement.

**Mr. Whelan:** Mr. Chairman, which side of the House will speak next?

**The Assistant Deputy Chairman:** The hon. member for Lisgar will be the next speaker. As is the custom during normal debate on a bill, the Chair recognizes alternately members from the left and the right. There is a proportion as between members of the three parties which is hopefully adhered to. May I now recognize the hon. member for Lisgar.

**Mr. Murta:** Mr. Chairman, at the outset I would like to correct the impression which the Minister of Agriculture has left with regard to agricultural research. I do not believe that the minister meant to leave the impression that he or his government increased the research budget in the main estimates which were being discussed earlier. Those main estimates were prepared by the former Progressive Conservative government, and in that context the research portion was allocated before he became the Minister of Agriculture once again.

My first question centres on the area of grain and grain exports. It has been my understanding, since I became a member of Parliament in the early seventies, that if it was not for grain and oil seeds Canada's agricultural picture would not be very rosy. These two grains are the basic export thrust of our country. They make the balance of trade picture in agriculture look very good.

As the minister knows, or should know, world trade in grains and oil seeds has more than doubled. The United States has benefited mostly from this statistic. Since 1961 their exports have tripled and their share has grown from 48 per cent to some 59 per cent. Canada, Australia and Argentina have slipped from 31 per cent to 25 per cent over that same 20 year period from the early 1960s to 1980. This would indicate that we have a long way to go in encouraging and increasing our agricultural exports.

A good many people in this country, particularly in western Canada, are vitally concerned over this drop and the fact that we have not been able to move back up to the level of exports

which we enjoyed in the early 1970s. There has been some discussion, most recently by the Canadian Wheat Board Advisory Committee, on what has been called an assured marketing system. If what I know about this assured marketing system is correct, it would mean that the Canadian Wheat Board would purchase all the grain at the end of the crop year at the initial price on the farm. What would happen then—for example, perhaps they would simply lock the bin—has not yet been worked out.

I am surprised that the bureaucracy in Ottawa would be considering this idea at this time when the government is low on cash. While I thought they would listen to the proposal, I did not think any action would be taken. It is my understanding that this approach is being considered and that the cost figure which is being mentioned is upwards of \$.5 billion in terms of maximum expenses if the program went ahead.

My question to the minister is this. How closely is this approach being considered by either the minister's department or by the grain group? Would the minister also comment on whether or not there will be any studies on this particular program? If my memory serves me correctly, the Wheat Board Advisory Committee wants some kind of decision on this particular program by the start of the 1981 crop year. I believe it was Roy Atkinson of Saskatoon who put the matter forward. Would the minister comment?

**Mr. Whelan:** Mr. Chairman, I am not aware of what the hon. member is discussing. Is he talking about feed grain or wheat? The Wheat Board Advisory Committee and the Canadian Livestock Feed Board Advisory Committee met and recommended that the Canadian Wheat Board take over total control of all feed grains.

**Mr. Murta:** That is right.

● (1650)

**Mr. Whelan:** That was a recommendation they made in case no other system could be devised to provide equity in the feed grain system. I do not know what is going to come of that, but I think it is great that these two groups met to discuss a problem which they recognized. The Wheat Board and the Canadian Livestock Feed Board would have to give the matter some consideration, and then it would have to come to the government for further consideration before it could be approved. It is only about a month since the two groups made that recommendation so I do not think there has been detailed study of it.

**Mr. Murta:** Mr. Chairman, even if the Canadian Wheat Board advisory committee and the Canadian Livestock Feed Board are both considering this matter and make a recommendation, obviously the program will come to nothing if the federal government has not studied it. Does the minister know if his department or the grains group propose to study the matter so that they will have their own information available?

**Mr. Whelan:** Mr. Chairman, many of the farm organizations have made suggestions about how the feed grain system