

and they had every reason to believe that the announcement of such a policy would be made. I am sure that at the present time they are both disappointed and disgusted with the minister's statement.

Mr. Ed. Schreyer (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, many of us in this chamber as well as many farmers across the country have been waiting for quite a long time now for the statement that has just been made by the Minister of Agriculture. As has already been said by the hon. member for Kent (Ont.) (Mr. Danforth), there really is not much substance to the alleged policy statement which has just been made by the minister. Of course the minister is quite good at analysing the problems which face the Canadian agricultural industry and which have faced it in the course of the past decade or more; but when it comes to giving some concrete indication as to what remedial action the government intends to take, the minister makes, as I say, a statement which simply has no substance.

The minister is optimistic, and many of us must remain optimistic, that the general price level of agricultural products will increase, and that prices paid under the international wheat agreement will be raised relatively soon. But even this, Mr. Speaker, will not make a substantial contribution toward easing the continuing cost-price squeeze which has prevailed for so long. By every index that one would care to look at it is becoming all too apparent and obvious that those who are engaged in the agricultural industry are facing a deteriorating economic position.

It is either a case, Mr. Speaker, of specific and rather massive action being taken by the government to improve the prices received by farm operators, or some kind of specific and tangible action which must be taken to try to hold the line on costs to the producer.

● (12:20 p.m.)

The minister tried to leave the impression that he has been active and successful in exercising moral suasion with respect to requests for increases by manufacturers of farm machinery. If he did so he ought to be prepared to table the correspondence. I did not clearly understand what he said on that point.

An hon. Member: He did not wish to table it.

Mr. Schreyer: I understand the minister is not prepared to table the correspondence. We

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must take his word that he has been in touch with some manufacturers and has succeeded in persuading them to hold the line on prices until we get the commission report, at least.

The hon. member for Humboldt-Melfort-Tisdale in particular asked whether the government contemplates imposing a moratorium with respect to prices, but the contention was advanced that there is no constitutional jurisdiction for that to be done. Would the minister take this problem seriously enough to investigate the feasibility of consulting with provincial authorities with a view to taking joint federal-provincial action in this regard which I submit would be *intra vires* and constitutional. The problem is serious enough when one considers farm machinery prices to warrant extraordinary joint federal-provincial action.

The minister may say there have been increases because material prices have increased, because the cost of labour has increased and that these increases have necessitated increased farm machinery prices. Yet the minister does not say what labour unit costs are involved in the manufacture of farm machinery. I submit that unit labour costs in this field have remained steady or may have gone down somewhat. Also the minister does not tell us as he should of profits earned in the farm machinery manufacturing sector. Those profits have increased dramatically upward in the past two years and that situation should not be tolerated.

The minister should exercise more than moral suasion; he should try to implement negotiations with the provinces to persuade them to take specific action. In the meantime, until something extraordinary is done in his field we may only look forward to a continuation of the cost-price squeeze and a worsening of conditions generally. Between the present time and two or three years in the future it will be necessary to increase moneys available under ARDA and other special programs to deal with problems of poverty in rural sectors; such moneys will have to be increased by 500 per cent or 600 per cent.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I shall allow the hon. member to continue in a moment. I do not wish to single him out from other hon. members, but statements made by ministers should be as concise as possible and, according to the standing order, comments should be brief. Representatives of the parties have made comments that are longer than they need be. I bring this to the attention of all hon. members.