

with a number of non-government agencies such as the Canadian Federation of Agriculture and the Canadian Food Processors Association, which also had very favourable comments for the strategy put forward by the Minister of Agriculture of Canada.

It is easy to suggest that this government has failed in implementing policies and programs designed to maintain a strong and fully developed agri-food industry. It is just as easy to prove, based on facts and figures, that the Canadian government has shown such undeniable leadership in agri-food policy as to put Canada among the four countries in the world that are net food exporters.

Besides, Canadian agricultural exports would not have the positive effects they are known to have had the government not played its role of assistance to this very important economic sector. Mr. Speaker, having had the privilege of serving as parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, I must say that many programs have been set up not only by the federal government alone but also in co-operation with the provinces, and because I have worked hand in hand with the Minister of Agriculture, I can assure the House that I have been most happy to see not only what has been done in Canada but also what has been done by us for developing countries.

I have been interested for several years in world food aid and Canada is second to no other country as far as food aid is concerned. I know about Canadian producers, and here I refer especially to our colleagues from western Canada, an area that has contributed so much to Canada's food exports, and each time I have been given the opportunity to visit that part of the country, I have realized how better acquainted with the facts of food aid the western provinces are than central Canada or the maritimes. Which does not mean that the maritime provinces, Quebec and Ontario are less interested in the food aid issue, but I think that because they acted somewhat as pioneers in Canada in the area of assistance to underdeveloped countries—I mean in food assistance—the farmers of western Canada, as far as I know and especially as far as I could ascertain when I had the privilege to serve as parliamentary secretary, are very much aware of the assistance which Canada is providing on an international level to the have-not countries of the world and where people are undernourished or dying of hunger.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I must say that although agriculture is not a top priority in the constituency which I have the honour to represent in this House, there being no farms there, mine being essentially an urban constituency, farming in Canada is of paramount importance to all Canadians, because we all have to eat and agriculture provides us with an abundant source of nourishing food. I have also had the opportunity to visit underdeveloped countries and appreciate the effort Canada is making. I came back to Canada convinced that we could increase substantially the level of our

### *Agriculture*

aid to Third World countries and especially that we could help underdeveloped countries develop their own agriculture.

It is a well-known fact, Mr. Speaker, that there are tens of thousands of people every year who are not only undernourished but who are dying from starvation, and I feel that it is a real shame that some countries should spend such huge amounts of money to arm themselves while devoting such a little share of their national budget to develop their agriculture. Together with the Minister of Agriculture, I have had the opportunity to take part in a number of FAO conferences in Rome and to visit a number of underdeveloped countries both in Latin America and Africa, and I can assure the House that back in Canada when we realize the tremendous potential of our farm industry, we are proud of all our past and future achievements. I must say that agriculture in Canada, which has already been mentioned by several speakers during this debate, is one of our major industries. High interest rates affect all Canadians, but in some parts of the country farmers are affected most. And I recognize with the opposition which has introduced this motion that solutions must be found to this high inflation and mostly high interest rates dilemma which, I hope, is only temporary.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly hope that our colleagues across the aisle will recognize this, and I do believe that several of them, who have sat on the Committee on Agriculture, will also recognize that the federal government, and I do not mean only the present government but all previous governments, has done everything in its power to provide Canadian farmers with all that they need so that Canada may continue to be one of the most progressive agricultural countries and, especially, the best fed country in the world.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to the Minister of Agriculture. Perhaps I am a bit biased for having worked with him, but if there is someone who has stood up for the cause of agriculture both in caucus and across Canada it is certainly this minister, and also for having acted in his capacity a number of times, I can say that everywhere, be it in the maritimes, in western Canada, in Ontario or in Quebec, people have always had the highest regard for him, because agriculture means a great deal to him, and because he defends it as best he can, and he does so admirably well.

● (2150)

[*English*]

**Mr. Blaine A. Thacker (Lethbridge-Foothills):** Mr. Speaker, it is easy to agree with this motion condemning the government for its treatment of the agricultural community. Among the many faults the government must bear, clearly the major one must be its treatment of agriculture. There is no doubt that the farmers of the nation should be in the streets rioting. The government has failed to respond in any meaningful manner to their needs.

What has the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) done for energy? The last tax increases imposed upon energy will