

When an industry suffers a drop in income of 56 per cent over two years, it must give concern to all members of the House. If this can happen to one industry, it is bound to affect others in Canada. We have already witnessed lay-offs in farm machinery plants in eastern Canada as a result of the farmers not buying as much machinery as they used to buy. This, in turn, aggravates the unemployment problem at the present time.

Not only the members of the agriculture committee but the people of Canada should also have cause for concern in regard to the stabilization plan outlined in this bill. Under this plan, the farmers of this country will have to pay 2 per cent of their total or gross income and the government will contribute 4 per cent. The other day the Minister, in explaining why gross income instead of net income had been selected, said that his economists did not know how calculations could be made on net income.

I should like to inform the minister that net income could have been used had the government wanted to do so. Perhaps this is why the former Minister of Communications, the hon. member for Duvernay (Mr. Kierans), said that all the government's advisers are second rate. If they cannot calculate income in terms of net income rather than gross income, then they must be second rate. We have too many second rate advisers in the Department of Agriculture and on the minister's staff. It is not we of the opposition who suffer but the farmers, who find themselves over a barrel because of lack of concern and inefficiency.

Under this stabilization plan the farmers will have to contribute 2 per cent of their income up to a maximum of \$15,000. Although the bill makes reference to the agricultural industry as a whole, it has no regional or provincial flexibility. In addition, the legislation repeals the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act, and PFAA is phased out. As I have already said, the bill has many long term implications. Personally, I think it is the first step toward implementing the report of the task force on agriculture which was released by the government several months ago. Passage of this bill will mean less government involvement in agriculture instead of more. The federal commitment, once this bill is passed, will be less than before when the old acts were in effect.

Mr. Lang: That is not true.

Mr. Nystrom: The minister says that is not true, but many farm organizations, such as the Farmers Union and others, say that it is true. Perhaps when the minister speaks he will want to comment on these matters which seem to be controversial and which are interpreted in different ways by members of the House. Many people think that this is true and, unfortunately, so do many of the farmers.

Another matter for concern under the stabilization section of the bill is that, to use the words of some farmers, it would stabilize poverty or low incomes in the farming communities of Canada.

Mr. Lang: That is not true, either.

Prairie Grain Stabilization Act

Mr. Nystrom: The minister says that is not true, either. Perhaps the minister would visit the farmers in my riding and tell them that this is not true, because certainly that is not their impression. In addition, the minister has been unable to offer any explanation to them. Perhaps this is where many members of this side of the House differ with the minister. Many of us are fed up with the piecemeal approach that he has taken during the last three years, the lackadaisical and aloof approach he has taken to agriculture. The way of life in western Canada is being eroded, not gradually but rapidly. As I said, farm incomes have dropped by 56 per cent. The cost of farm machinery and the cost of producing a bushel of wheat has risen each and every year. The Barber commission has stated that the farmers have been victimized for years by the high price of farm machinery.

I should like to know why the government does not take some action in this regard. They have many economic tools in their hands to bring down the cost of farm machinery. I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that perhaps they are more interested in protecting the farm machinery companies than the farmers and ordinary people of Canada. This is why the government has not taken action, and is probably why it will not do very much about implementing some of the recommendations made by the Barber commission.

Many people have left the province of Saskatchewan, having been forced out by low farm incomes and the lack of real stability in the province as a whole. Businesses have gone bankrupt, people have become unemployed. We have seen the erosion of small communities as a result not only of agricultural policy but other government plans as well. The closing of rural post offices, the removal of station agents and other changes of this sort have all contributed to threatening the rural way of life in western Canada. I think this is a way of life that is worth preserving, but only the government can act to preserve, to stimulate and to assist it.

The answer of the government has been to establish the task force, a task force on which the farmers themselves were not really represented and other people talked about the way of life of our farmers. What has this task force recommended? It has recommended a number of measures that the minister is now trying to implement. One of the recommendations is that two thirds of the farmers must leave their farms in the name of efficiency; another that there must be less government involvement in agriculture instead of more. Other countries in the world have governments that are becoming more and more involved in helping farmers by allowing them to plan and to organize for themselves.

• (4:00 p.m.)

If you analyse this whole situation, what is the logical conclusion? What is going to happen? We are going to see more and more farmers leave the land each and every year, perhaps at an accelerated rate, as is happening today in the west. We will see more and more of our towns, villages and small cities dwindle and disappear. These places are directly tied to the farming community. If this trend continues, we will have in western Canada,