

has become too expensive for farmers to use. The return of the average farm is not as great as the interest rate on the money that farmers borrow, and unless this government gives immediate cash relief to the western farmers by next spring I predict that 25 per cent of them will be bankrupt and will be gone from the land. I think that anybody who is familiar with the situation can do little else but agree with me. In short, any picture I could paint pertaining to the situation of the western grain farmers, no matter how black, could hardly portray the full seriousness of the situation.

We have heard the suggestions of the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Basford) and we have also heard in the house about the fight against inflation. I think this subject was also mentioned in the budget address. But the farmers of western Canada have been fighting inflation for the last 20 years. They have been selling at 1940 prices in 1950 and 1960 markets. In 1939 farmers paid \$1,200 for a three or four plough tractor. Today, they pay about \$5,000 for the same machine. At that time we sold a bushel of wheat for 50 cents. Today, a great many farmers are getting about \$1 for it.

• (9:20 p.m.)

The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) spoke about the problems but he did no more than that; he did not offer any solutions. I was really quite ashamed when I realized he was representing a province of the west, although I do commend him for having done, probably, all he could in the circumstances in which he finds himself, likely in a somewhat hostile cabinet. I was happy about some of the things he has done—some of the programs he has made possible. But I was deeply ashamed when a Minister of the Crown came out last week with an appeal to consumers to boycott beef. Beef is one of the few things they have in the west that is keeping the economy going at all. God knows, the extra which a beef producer is receiving is nowhere near the amount of price increase which is being demanded of consumers.

The Minister of Agriculture needs to speak to his colleagues about this crisis. I notice that when he was addressing the house only six of his hon. friends were sitting in the house listening to him. To me this indicates the extent of the interest on the government side in this critical agricultural situation. Six members out of 153 listening to the Minister of Agriculture talk on the western crisis!

Alleged Failure to Aid Western Farmers

The minister listed some of the accomplishments which had been achieved in the agriculture field—some of the new credit provisions and measures for extension of credit. But there are other accomplishments, too. There was the accomplishment of transferring dairy produce totalling eight million pounds from the western provinces to Quebec. There was the accomplishment, if one can call it that, of organizing the pile-up at Vancouver this winter when ships waiting to load grain cargoes were unable to do so because we were not in a position to supply the types of grain needed.

Long term planning is required, certainly, but what these farmers need is cash right now, today, tomorrow, or next week. Long term planning has no value at this stage for a large number of these farmers because they will not be here to take advantage of it. When we ask for subsidies, when we ask for immediate cash help, the question is asked: where is the money coming from; taxes are as high today as they can go. But let us take a look at the situation. As the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) stated last week—and it was repeated this afternoon by the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Douglas)—there was apparently no difficulty about remitting \$80 million of duty to the automobile manufacturers, \$75 million of this going to one company. I looked at the financial statement of that company and found that its net profit last year was well over \$50 million. So, we can hardly consider it to be a charity case. Funds are certainly as well funnelled into agriculture in a time of crisis as back into the automobile industry.

We find that taxpayers are subsidizing every seat in the new Arts Centre. Assuming a sell-out crowd for 100 nights of the year, and taking everything into consideration, the subsidy on every ticket sold amounts to something like \$35. I am not saying I do not approve of the Arts Centre. This sort of thing is possibly necessary and desirable; you cannot put a price on some of these things. But I am saying that when there are bread and butter issues to deal with, surely they come first. Take the situation of the C.B.C. which presents "Things As They Really Are"—the title of one of its programs. This organization costs the taxpayers in the neighbourhood of \$150 million a year and it is not too discriminating in choosing the topics it brings before the public, either; we often run into criticism here. There are economies which could be made in the civil service. In many of