

Mr. Whelan: Good idea.

Mr. Benjamin: I wish the Minister of Agriculture would rise on a point of order to indicate one way, let alone 100, to stabilize producer income without spending tax money—and without using up a portion of my time.

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member claims to be a farmer from urban Regina. He knows full well that neither the provincial government nor I am putting a penny into the coffers of farmers through provincial marketing associations or boards or through the federal system, and they are making a darned good living.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister does not have a point of order. He appears to be entering into debate.

Mr. Benjamin: I hope, Mr. Speaker, you will take that one minute off my time. I am glad the Minister of Agriculture said that. I have listened to him expounding for many years around here. I give him credit for supporting orderly marketing and marketing boards. I wish he would get that message through to some of his colleagues who seem to carry more weight and muscle on that side of the House. When it comes to orderly producer-controlled marketing and marketing boards, the system indicates that agricultural producers shall get their cost of production plus their living, which is all I am requesting. I defy anyone to tell me the producer of any agricultural product can cover his cost of production and make his living under the so-called free and open market system. It has never happened and will never happen, Mr. Speaker. Only those who rely, either totally or mainly, on a marketing board process have been able to achieve some measure of economic stability or financial stability.

● (2040)

With all due respect to my colleague, the hon. member for Medicine Hat (Mr. Hargrave), I want to tell him that I have listened to beef producers from all over Canada for the last 14 years. Most years they come here and ask us not to interfere, to leave them the free, open market system. But as soon as they are hurt, they are back here crying, with their hands out. They have to make up their minds, Mr. Speaker, and admit once and for all that the so-called free market system under which they operate out of Medicine Hat, Maple Creek, Regina, Swift Current or anywhere else, is based on prices set in Chicago and Montreal. The beef producer of western Canada has absolutely no say whatever in it. It is about time beef producers got rid of the delusion that somehow or other they have a say in the free and open market. It has never worked that way and it never will.

There is other news for us, Mr. Speaker, from the Minister of State for Economic Development who sits in the other place and is supposed to be a prairie boy. The committee says that the termination of the Crow rate is the first priority of a new transportation policy. This committee of cabinet suggests—and I suppose this is the buy-off—that they should buy another 3,000 hopper cars, pay \$500 million for a branch line

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rehabilitation program and pay an annual subsidy of \$500 million to \$600 million. That would cost those dummies more than they are paying out now, Mr. Speaker.

The same cabinet document refers to “we”. I presume that means the Minister of State for Economic Development, the Minister of Finance and the other five people on the committee. They conclude that it would be ideal if farmers paid the full price of transporting western grain. It is no wonder that farmers have no prospects, Mr. Speaker. At the moment they have high interest rates and mortgages that they will not live long enough to pay off. They have the prospect of what the cabinet committee proposes to hand to agriculture and to transportation generally right across Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Fred McCain (Carleton-Charlotte): Mr. Speaker, it was rather interesting to listen to the hon. member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin). It did not seem to me that he had any solutions but just the same old philosophical yarn that he has been spinning for a long time. Perhaps one of his deficiencies is that he has never lived on a farm and has no conception of how to run one.

Mr. Benjamin: I worked on one.

Mr. McCain: He feels that the only answer to the requirement is a marketing board. Let us examine the conditions where there is one of the strongest marketing structures in agriculture in the country. That happens to be in the hands of the dairy farmers of Canada. I should like to refer to a couple of lines in a document which shows the support that this strong organization has received from the government. A copy of its submission arrived in my office on June 8 of this year. In part it said that the level of government expenditures on the program may be unjustified or excessive. They contended that they were justified and, moreover, were declining in real terms at a substantial rate.

This is an organization which is not being continually supported by the government. It entered into its agreement with the government in good faith only to find that the government's contribution was declining in real terms at a substantial rate. The document went on to say that industrial milk in Canada is being substantially overpriced. It questioned the inclusion of this document among the interdepartmental committee papers as being very odd. Not only are its conclusions unsupported, it claimed, but they are not even reflected later on in the discussion papers.

So much for farm organizations and government fair play. I would say to the hon. member for Regina West that farm organizations are not dealing with a structure that understands how to treat them.

I should like to commend the hon. member for Chicoutimi (Mr. Dionne) on his speech. Tonight, as always, he proved himself the most knowledgeable and intelligent contributor to agricultural debate from your right, Mr. Speaker. He relied