

Supply

must take into consideration—the direction which the country will take with regard to land ownership.

In closing, I suggest that farmers be encouraged to produce. Production must not be restricted through taxation or in any other way. The government must fall in line with an economic development program so that Canada can become the productive country that it should be.

The Deputy Chairman: Order, please. There are only 30 seconds left for the minister to answer.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Chairman, I am glad to have this opportunity to discuss agriculture tonight because it is the principal interest and primary concern of many people in my riding. I will be brief because I want to hear some comments from the minister.

● (2330)

Tonight I shall focus very quickly and briefly on two subjects. The first is research and development. We must bear in mind the need for research as well as the need to translate it into farming techniques. The proof of success will be higher quality and production of farm products.

The second concern is transportation, particularly the transportation of farm products to market. It is useless to increase production if the crops cannot be brought to market. They just end up sitting on the farm, costing money.

One of the primary concerns in regard to research and development is rapeseed. The present strains are not adequate to cope with soil conditions and climate. The federal government ought to provide leadership in producing a seed better suited to our area. Another concern is beekeeping. I am sure the minister is aware that the honey capital of Canada, the town of Falher, is located in the heart of my riding and that a lot of residents derive their livelihood from keeping bees. Bees are brought in every spring from California at considerable expense to farmers and with the risk of loss. Again, the federal government ought to demonstrate leadership by providing research to develop a strain of bees that could winter in the area.

The third area of concern, not only to people in my riding but to people all over Canada, is the on-farm production of farm fuels. I know that other members have indicated their interest in the subject. I understand that the possibility of using "canola" as a substitute for diesel fuel has been tested and found to be practical, although it is extremely expensive at the moment. We are all aware that energy prices are rising and that at some point farm substitutes should be available as they will be a viable option. I call on the federal government to show leadership in research in regard to this.

On this matter of research, Mr. Chairman, I should like to ask the minister if he will consider the possibility of forming an independent joint federal-provincial industry commission which would be responsible for carrying out the policy of the government for the co-ordination of research and development and see that discoveries are translated into action on the farm.

I want to come now to the matter of transportation. The ultimate potential of my area cannot be realized under the present transportation system, which is inadequate. I know the minister will find this somewhat out of his area but I should like to draw his attention to the annual report of Agriculture Canada which states that the mandate of the minister is as follows:

—to develop the nation's agriculture and food system to meet the needs of Canadians for reasonably priced food and at the same time to provide farmers with a fair return for their labour and investment—

I should like to draw attention to three areas in my riding, Mr. Chairman, Valleyview, Worsley, and Lacrete. In these areas farmers are forced to transport their grain an average of 120 kilometres as opposed to the prairie average of 20 kilometres. They face six times the usual cost, and as energy costs rise we know they are going to have a more difficult time maintaining their level of profit. Other farmers enjoy subsidized freight rates but these farmers receive no subsidy.

The minister will realize that there are two possible solutions to the problem. The first is to build a railway to the area but the farmers have ruled this out, as I have. We are aware that it would cost in the neighbourhood of \$4 million per year over a life expectancy of 25 years. We know that this is impracticable. There is a second possibility and that is the off-line elevator concept.

● (2335)

There are three conditions that must first be met. The first is to get an elevator built on the site. The second is an adequate supply of hopper cars for on-line elevators to take away the extra grain. The third is simply a commercial trucking subsidy to cover the cost of transportation between the off-site and the on site elevators.

The grain companies have indicated their interest in getting elevators established at these off line points. Therefore, the first concern is taken care of. The second regarding an adequate supply of hopper cars has basically been taken care of. My Liberal supporter has just left the chamber, so I am a bit concerned. On November 19, 1980, the Senator responsible for the Wheat Board said in the Senate, and I quote:

—if and when there is a provision for off-line elevators, it absolutely follows . . . that there would be a fair allocation of hopper cars within that area so as to accommodate the extra grain that is going into those off-line elevators.

We can see therefore that the second concern is taken care of. The third is simply the matter of the trucking subsidy from the off-line to the on-line elevator. To date the minister responsible for the program has clearly abandoned this idea. He has offered no support and indicated no co-operation with people in my constituency.

The former minister responsible for transport, the hon. member for Vegreville, indicated that his government was prepared to use my area as a test area for a pilot project for the off-line concept. We are prepared to move in that direction. In light of that, I would ask the minister the following questions. First, does he agree that farmers in my area are justified in expecting a fair return for their efforts and that, the off-line concept must therefore be implemented? Second, with the implementation of that off-line concept, will he ensure