

Agricultural Policies

should pay them yet on their feet again instead of imposing new burdens on them.

What matters is that hon. members should appreciate this unbearable situation. People say: The Quebec farmers demonstrate and shout in the streets. No wonder that they indulge in such demonstrations when they are the victims of such glaring injustices. If the same thing were to be done in the western provinces, we would soon witness a rebellion, but in the province of Quebec, we are used to be abused, and—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but his time is expired.

[*English*]

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, for a few moments this afternoon I should like to speak in this debate which concerns agriculture and the problems of rural people. Fortunately, many of the debates which take place in this House refer to agriculture and farmers. Although the percentage of farmers in our country is declining steadily and we are becoming an urban people, we must not underestimate the importance of this industry to our country. Surely many of us have a background related to the rural areas of Canada. Urbanization in our country has taken place in recent years only.

As our country changes, so must agriculture change. Many of these changes are catalogued and predicted in the task force report on agriculture. These changes will effect us all, especially the people living on the smaller farms and those of advanced years in life. The responsibility for smoothing this transition from farming to other jobs or retirement will fall on government, and especially the federal government. The Canfarm system, which is a farm management data system, is an example of co-operation between provincial and federal governments and universities to bring the advantages of technology to aid the practical commercial farmer. In the old days when a farmer had a half dozen cows, a few chickens and a team of horses this sort of technical assistance was not necessary, but it is today when you see more specialization and larger farm units.

However, for every farmer going into farming in a larger way and requiring tools like the Canfarm data system there are many more going out of farming. The federal government has just signed a new agreement with the province of Ontario for some \$60 million over the next five years under the

[Mr. Gauthier.]

ARDA program. This program will give assistance in retiring marginal farms in many areas of the province. It will also consolidate small farms on good land, regroup them and lease them back or sell them to viable farmers with viable units. A good provision in this agreement is that many of these farms can be leased, instead of purchased, for a period of ten years. Improvements to the land can be made with ARDA funds. The big advantage of this program is that the farmer does not have to raise the capital for these farms but can simply lease the land at very reasonable rates for a period of years.

An important new provision in the Ontario-Canada agreement is that for special assistance to farmers retiring from uneconomic farms. There are so many areas of our country with farmers of advanced years who have not enough assets to retire on. If they sell their farm, often they do not realize enough out of it to buy a house in town to which to retire. The program, I hope and trust, will bridge this gap.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that our production technology has gone far beyond our marketing ability. We can produce too much food but we cannot sell it at a price that enables the producer to obtain a decent return on his investment, management and labour. All too often he does not even get reasonable wages, let alone anything for his management or as return on investment. I trust that out of the task force report on agriculture will come a comprehensive farm policy which will bring a better life for our friends and neighbours on the farms of Canada. Indeed, one of the reasons for establishing the task force was so that a comprehensive national policy could be designed comprising of new structures and plans for orderly marketing which would bring reasonable returns to producers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Order, please. It being five o'clock, it is my duty to inform the House that pursuant to section 11 of Standing Order 58 the proceedings on the motion before the House are deemed to have expired.

Mr. Walker: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the House would agree to revert to motions in order that I might make a short announcement about the tragic situation in Peru. The message to the House is brief.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Is there unanimous agreement?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.