

Family Farm

● (1640)

If he does not have this amount of \$5,000, \$10,000, \$15,000, \$20,000 or \$25,000 according to the size of the business he intends to buy, he will not conceivably get started in agriculture. Even with the best talents and the best will in the world he will not be able to get a start. His attempt is doomed to failure. First, our present legislation will not allow him to do it and there are no credit sources available for large farms.

So it is absolutely necessary to develop a new farming policy. Today, I appeal to all members because it is a top priority item for any government. This government should, during the next session, if possible, introduce a bill to make available the amounts necessary to get the young farmers started. The terms might vary. Of course, the applicant shall have to meet some criteria to qualify. It is quite normal.

I think we should allow young men 20 years or 25 years old who have the potential and particularly the will to go into farming, to get the credit and the money they need because if we do not, Mr. Speaker, more and more young people will quit farming. I should like to sound a note of warning to everybody and it is not a matter of political partisanship, but if we fail to do it now, it will be very expensive to bring people back to farming later.

The price we should pay today to keep young farmers and help them to carry on their trade is extremely low compared to what we will have to pay five, ten or fifteen years from now if we wait that long to bring people back to farming.

This is a real challenge to us Canadians, it is a great responsibility to discharge. If we are to provide the Canadian people of tomorrow with a production adequate in quantity and quality and sufficient to help other countries, we have very soon to establish a bank that will provide the funds required by the young people who wish to have that kind of help. Some young people want to work in agriculture, I know some who do. Some study agriculture in technical schools. They want and they say: Tomorrow I graduate. I would like to go into agriculture but I can't afford to buy my father's farm, my uncle's, that of the neighbour, or the guy who will leave it because he has no one to take over.

That is the fundamental question we have to answer, Mr. Speaker. We should not blame the minister. Yet, the hon. member blamed solely the minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board. In closing, I would like to point this out: In 1973—and this was published in western farm news papers, amongst other by the one we received this week—western producers will have had the highest income ever in Canada. To my mind, instead of criticizing him we should pay tribute to the minister for his good work and foresight.

The blame for some of today's problems must not be laid exclusively on a minister. I think that the minister has done a tremendous job. It is inconceivable and unacceptable that he be held responsible. He has indeed been superb.

In concluding, I want to point out a glaring contradiction in the hon. member's remarks. On the one hand he said that this sad state of affairs was the result of govern-

[Mr. Lessard.]

ment interference with the freedom of farmers. And on the other, had he said that government interference should be increased.

A choice will have to be made. Farmers have been provided with the tools, and it is quite freely, Mr. Speaker, that they will choose, now and in the future, to use them. We do not intend to lay down any conditions. We merely, and surely, want to help them, and I am positive that all the parties will agree on that point.

[English]

Mr. Yewchuk: Mr. Speaker, I wanted to ask the hon. member a question. He said that many things need to be done. Since his government has been in power for ten years, I wonder whether he could tell me why all these things have not been done as yet?

Mr. Lessard: Is the hon. member asking me what we have done in the last ten years? Is he asking me to enumerate the list of achievements, before the House today, in the few seconds left to me in accordance with the order made by the House? Let me tell him that it would take me the rest of the hour, and even then I would not finish listing the achievements of this government. Let me tell him also that we could have done much more if we had had the support of the official opposition, instead of continual opposition.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Perhaps hon. members should deal with this matter in the spirit of Christmas. I understand the messenger from the other place may be a little late in arriving, so the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean (Mr. Lessard) might be given extra time to reply to the question. In any event, I think the House should be advised that we may be sitting for a few minutes longer. We will see what happens.

Mr. Lessard: Mr. Speaker, I have not yet completed my speech.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Athabasca (Mr. Yewchuk) wishes to rise on a point of order.

Mr. Yewchuk: Mr. Speaker, if you are going to let the hon. member continue to speak, I might as well put another question to him.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Yewchuk: The other question is: What action will this government take to compensate the western farmers for the \$4.2 billion loss which was created by the minister responsible for the Wheat Board through his programs?

Mr. Lessard: The best answer to this question is that the premise of the question is inaccurate. I was here three years ago when that action was taken by the government, and I am sure many members here remember all the questions that were raised by the opposition. For hours they blamed the government for the surplus in production, for the huge pile of grain on the prairies. They asked what the government would do with that.

Mr. Lang: Record sales.