

Supply

Mr. Chairman, there are certain questions I should like to ask and I hope the Minister of Agriculture will give attention to them. There is one arrangement in particular which I think needs adjustment. While it relates directly to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration, I believe the Minister of Agriculture ought to be interested. The regulations pertaining to on-the-job training as they relate to agriculture are drawn up by the bureaucratic structure of the Minister of Manpower and Immigration so as to require specific dates for applications for help and the period of time in which workers are to be employed. In my view, this practice does not meet the needs of a seasonal operation such as agriculture. The farmer who applies for his manpower training candidate is the man who best knows for which season he needs that worker. He is the man who knows in what period he can best train the applicant for the position.

Several farmers have been denied the opportunity to train a candidate by virtue of the dates which were established and the period during which it was necessary to employ the individual concerned. This objection is particularly applicable in the case of the potato industry where workers are not needed until some time in April. But the date for applications has been fixed for December and employment begins as of March 1. This does not suit the industry. A later starting date should be set. The program should be open-ended as far as dates are concerned.

I asked a question in the committee which dealt with these estimates, and I put it again to the minister because I have received no answer so far. Is it the intention of the government that the grain cars now in service in the west are to constitute only lip service to the transportation program, or is transportation to be considered seriously as a national agricultural problem?

At the time Canada was forming we seemed to learn a few lessons. One of the lessons that the west learned before it came into confederation was that the Crowsnest pass rates for grain must be legislated, that there would be no argument about it. That was a smart move and I admire them for it. But it was also intended that equal protection would be given to eastern agriculture and to all the extremities of Canada that sent products to Canadian markets when confederation was first born.

• (2100)

This is a privilege that has been denied by virtue of the lack of a transportation policy in this country, and certainly agriculture in the east is suffering as a result and suffering severely. Indeed, agriculture in the west is also suffering. It makes no difference whether we are talking about apples from British Columbia or from Nova Scotia, potatoes from New Brunswick or Alberta, or peaches from Ontario: the transportation facilities that are available to transport these products to market are not up to those of 25 years ago. In other words, we have gone backwards. Such a policy must be made available to agriculture if this minister is to alleviate the situation.

Another problem agriculture is facing is that under the tax laws today it is virtually impossible for a father to pass on to his son, or for a son to inherit from his father, a farming enterprise. I have heard no sympathy expressed

[Mr. McCain.]

anywhere in the House for this unfair situation. The cost involved in passing on a farm from father to son or to sons is beyond the capacity of the individual to bear. This is no wonder since our profit opportunities in 1970 were no better than they were in 1945. It is indeed a dire situation.

So far as a feed grains policy is concerned, we have been told some kind of council is going to advise the government and advise agriculture. Plans were placed before the Federation of Agriculture for consideration, but one province in its wisdom chose to back out of this conference and not participate in the proposed arrangement. This is a further symptom of the inadequate transportation policy in Canada today. We have a hodgepodge, step by step emergency-type program with no long-range opportunities given to agriculture and no long-range commitments made by the government.

Let me give the committee another example of the sort of thinking that went into this sugar beet deal. I am not sure whether any part of the Atlantic area is interested in it, but I asked the minister earlier in the House whether he would determine if the soil was fit for beet production in areas where an alternate crop was required and if a beet crop would be acceptable to the farmers concerned. If this sugar beet proposal is to be national policy, then the minister should never have stopped at the Quebec border in discussing sugar beets in his speech tonight.

Until such time as the research facilities of the Department of Agriculture are overhauled, our agricultural production will not be what it should. Some years ago the minister and those in charge of research decided there should be certain stations adopted across Canada which would be used for specialized purposes. Fredericton was chosen for one purpose, Charlottetown for another, Vineland for yet another, and so on. On the surface it looked to be a healthy and efficient sort of program, but what it failed to recognize was that in a country such as ours where there is demand for fodder feed and grains across the nation, research that might be effective for the west was totally ineffective for the east.

If we are to have diversification in agriculture we must have diversification in research in the various areas of Canada, whether it be in livestock, grain, fruit and vegetables or what have you. Wheat, barley and oats which may grow at their best in the west do not necessarily grow at their best in the east and produce an economic crop. Yet at this moment in time we have no effective cereal grains research program in the eastern areas of Canada to produce those varieties we are capable of producing, thus saving the federal government a lot of money by way of freight rate subsidies. Until such time as the cost of grain production reaches the point where we in the east can produce grains competitively with the west—which I think will come eventually with research—we must retain a feed grain transportation policy that puts products in the markets of Canada at an equal price at the point of delivery, regardless of their source.

The minister emphasized one other point tonight that I should like to take up. The charging of the provinces with responsibility for agricultural emergencies is basically a wrong policy. Agriculture should be a national concern. When the farmers of New Brunswick, Prince Edward