

consent in order to move in the fashion proposed by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. I do not have an answer for the Minister of Agriculture. It has been noted in previous proceedings that some hon. members apparently put questions to the minister or, as he says, accusations, and then there is not enough time for him to answer. As I said on Monday, that is the way the rules now read. I cannot do anything about that unless some hon. member wants to propose a new system.

I certainly do not want to frustrate the will of the House. I think it is fair to point out that if the hon. minister is not satisfied with the proposal made by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, he only has to withhold unanimous consent and the matter will not go forward.

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Chairman, may I suggest that we try it until nine o'clock tonight and if by that time the minister has not been able to get in, we can review the situation.

Mr. Crosbie: On the same point of order, Mr. Chairman, I have a suggestion for a new procedure. Instead of Liberal members, when they have their turn, occupying it with self-congratulatory statements and nonsensical support of the government, they could give the minister some time to do the exact same thing. He would feel better and everything would go along more smoothly. One out of every three members is a Liberal, unfortunately. That is something that the next election will solve.

Mr. Collette: Mr. Chairman, as usual, the hon. member for St. John's West has injected a purely irrelevant note into the debate. All members are equal in this House, and Liberal members have every right to question the Minister of Agriculture, as do members on the other side. I think the conduct in this debate by members on this side of the House has been exemplary. The record will show that members on our side have not made 20-minute speeches.

● (1650)

They have been asking questions and probing the minister in the same way as members on the opposite side.

The reason I rise again is to say that we are very flexible on this side, as we are in all matters. If it is the desire of one particular party to have more members ask questions, we would be flexible on that proposition. Perhaps we could reserve the decision for a moment and consult with the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and the hon. member for Elgin so we can work out a system instead of using the valuable time of the committee. Perhaps we could come back in a few minutes with an acceptable formula which will not restrict the right of any one party to participate in the debate. The formula has been well established to allow members to use the time allotted to their parties.

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Chairman, could there be agreement to let the hon. member for Prince Albert and the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain have the next 20 minutes, and in the meantime we can review the situation about the rest of the day?

Supply

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: It is my impression that matters have proceeded far enough along the lines proposed by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. The hon. member is reducing the time as originally proposed to the House. It is my understanding that hon. members are ready to proceed on a trial effort of no particular duration.

I just want to remind hon. members that there is the possibility that with one, two or three minutes left in any given time slot, there will be various members who will rise wanting recognition. We can see that might cause some distress. However, it has been proposed by the hon. member that we try this procedure. As I understand it, all members who have stood for recognition have agreed to try the procedure without any particular time limit. This is subject to discussion, as the parliamentary secretary indicated, to see whether he is satisfied and others are satisfied that it will work well.

Mr. Collette: Mr. Chairman, we have not agreed to any particular formula. I have asked that we wait for a few minutes so we can discuss the matter outside the chamber and come back when there is an agreement on the way in which we should proceed.

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: As far I am concerned, that is exactly what I just said. We will proceed in that fashion and the Chair will be advised by hon. members in due course if a specific ruling is wanted. In the meantime, the Chair will recognize members in the normal way.

I shall now recognize the hon. member for Prince Albert. My apologies to him. The discussion was centred on the subject matter of his party so much so that I omitted recognizing the hon. member for Algoma, whose turn it is to speak.

Mr. Foster: Mr. Chairman, perhaps this will give hon. members a chance to work out the arrangement just discussed.

I believe the agricultural economy and the production of food is very important. In the next 20 years we will see acute shortages in many areas. Three commodities, minerals, energy and food, will be very important to the world. Food and the capability of a country to produce food will become ever more important. During the past decade we have seen great uncertainties for agricultural producers. These have waxed and waned in importance, but in my own district of Algoma-Manitoulin our agricultural producers have experienced periods of severe uncertainty. For example, the drought period of a couple of years ago and the very depressed prices for beef meant that producers and cow-calf operators suffered from 1975 to 1978. There have been tremendous increases in input costs which dairy producers are experiencing, including such things as the rapid increase in the price of land, fertilizers, fuel, machinery and help. These all add up to uncertainty about the future.

It is important that the Government of Canada and the associated provincial governments do their part in evening out these mountains and valleys for the agricultural producers. The Minister of Agriculture has visited my agricultural producing areas on a couple of occasions. He is always welcome