

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

were not aware of the government's retraining programs or even the location of manpower centres, is it the intention of the government to provide some emergency information to the farmers or must they wait for a white paper on this subject?

In the next few minutes I wish to outline why I was motivated to ask this question of the Minister. I think it is very important. Basically, I had two reasons for asking the question. First, it is obvious from the task force report that the farmers of western Canada are not aware of federal government programs that are available to them. It is said that only about 40 per cent of our farmers are aware of federal government programs. It is also said that a very large proportion of Canadian farmers are not aware of the location of manpower centres in their localities.

The second reason for my asking the question is the farm crisis we are today experiencing in western Canada. Because of this crisis there is today an accelerating shift of rural dwellers into the urban centres of our country. This is the most drastic shift we have seen since the 1930s, and it will get worse and worse.

If you look at the basic figures, Mr. Speaker, you will see that last year the average income per acre to farmers in western Canada was \$8.09. Meanwhile, costs per acre have risen to \$21.49. I emphasize that income per acre is \$8 and outgo \$21. Clearly, even the most efficient farmer cannot begin to make ends meet. This situation affects everybody in western Canada—the farmer, the teacher and the small businessman. Small businesses are closing. Farm machinery sales, for instance, have dropped by about 23 per cent. Housing starts are down by 21 per cent. This means disaster to the whole economy. As a matter of fact, about the only business that is making any profit or headway nowadays is the moving business in moving people into the cities and out of rural areas. That is why I pose my question. We find that when people from rural areas move into the cities many of them join the ranks of the urban poor and unemployed. This not only affects the unemployed person, but his family and the future of the family educationally as well as in many other ways.

● (10:00 p.m.)

Just the other day a presidential report in the United States dealt with the reasons for violence and the question of the prevention of violence. It suggested there was in the United

States a very high relationship between poverty and violence. Another commission set up when Kennedy was the President suggested that one reason for the decaying of cities relates to poor people coming in from the countryside to join the ranks of the urban poor. We have to try to avoid this situation not only for the sake of the individual but for all society.

Why are the farmers not being informed about government programs? I think the first reason is that the government is not getting information to the farmer about the type of programs now available. First and foremost we should keep the farmers on the farms by making them aware of new techniques, planning, agricultural economies and methods. If a farmer has to leave the farm we should make him aware of the different training programs available to him as well as the different relocation programs. We should make him aware of the types of jobs and skills available to him with his qualifications. According to the task force, this is apparently not being done today. It could, of course, be done through public relations efforts at each of the manpower centres. It could also be done by sending letters to all the farmers, together with leaflets and pamphlets. This should be done in times of crisis such as the one we are now experiencing.

Besides this we could use the media of radio, television and newspapers in order to spell out what is available to these people with their qualifications. We must begin an emergency program and work in this direction, because 40 per cent of our farmers are not aware of the many programs which exist, and there is a farm crisis in the west.

Before resuming my seat let me refer to one or two precautionary measures. First of all, I am in favour of the family farm and reaffirm that we should help as much as possible those farmers who are in economic difficulty which will eventually lead them to seek other employment. Second and last, I should not like to see this report become an excuse for the government to issue propaganda through various agencies. This is being done by a number of provincial governments. The information that must be provided should be legitimate and should inform the farmer, other individuals and specific groups, of the government programs open and available to them. I am looking forward to the minister's reply in respect of the suggestions I have made.