

*The Address—Mr. Southam*

Further, the Canada Grains Council stated the following on September 28:

The decline of the Canadian share of wheat exports started in 1968, extended into 1969 and under present conditions the horizon appears dim.

If all this were an unalterable truth, I suppose I could accept the implied invitation of the government and rally around the flag to teach the west something about accepting one's fate with a generous and forgiving heart. However, I disagree that we should take such a pessimistic stance. Furthermore, I say most emphatically that the single most damnable and divisive act of this government has been its withdrawn approach and defeatism with regard to the future of western Canadian agriculture. I would like to give a clear example. The *Winnipeg Free Press* of September 5 reported the following:

**Agriculture Importance on Decline—Olson Makes Known Results of Government's Sponsored Studies.** Agriculture will decline in importance in the Canadian economy in the next ten years, studies made by three federal department economists show. Their findings were released Friday by Agriculture Minister H. A. Bud Olson.

I have here a copy of the press release. I am sorry that the name of the Minister of Agriculture is associated with the pessimistic and fatalistic tone of this report. It says:

1. In 1966, about 10 per cent of the population lived on farms. By 1980 this will drop to 6 per cent.
2. In 1967, about 5 per cent of Canada's gross national product came from agriculture. In 1980 this will be about 3 per cent.
3. The agriculture and labour force will decline from 559,000 (7.6 per cent) in 1967 to about 386,000 (4 per cent) by 1980.

I emphasize the point that despite the mechanization of our farms and the reduction of our farm population, the volume of our agricultural products has increased, and the fact is that exportable agricultural products are the second largest source of income of Canada. Therefore, we in western Canada are unable to understand the mentality of this government which associates itself with the very pessimistic views of some of its economists. It seems to me that this study is largely a waste of time and is harmful to the necessary recovery of western agriculture. To publicize a hypothetical project which generates in a responsible press a headline such as "Agriculture Importance on Decline" is immensely damaging to western Canada.

• (4:20 p.m.)

The minister has not released a series of guidelines for action, but a projection of withdrawal. Is this an invitation for Canadi-

[Mr. Southam.]

ans to ignore the present plight of western Canada and its future contribution to the Canadian economy? Considering that the government has only one constructive legislative proposal to make in response to the plight of western farmers, it is an understatement to suggest that the Minister of Agriculture could have better employed his experts. Are the forecasts of these studies of much importance? Do we have to live within them? Is it right that the minister should popularize them? The assumptions underlying this report are probably complete. However, to be credible they must remain considerably static. I cannot accept, for example, that production and marketing policies must remain the same and that our share of international markets will not change and can be predetermined.

I do not agree that it is good enough for long-term planners or cabinet ministers to advertise the proposition that if trends continue and a particular share of the market is obtained, sales volume will be at a predictable and predetermined level. Shares of market and markets are not predetermined but are established by competitive positions, the price and services packages and by promotion efforts in other marketing instruments. In today's world it is not good enough to share developed markets. Such assumptions do not pre-occupy energetic governments. Aggressive and modern selling practices could not have been part of the assumptions of these projections. We do not have aggressive or modern selling practices. Compared with our largest competitor, the United States, we spend very little on such a basic task as marketing research. To conclude this point, there is no proper case to be made that we cannot achieve prosperity for the population of western Canada. The pessimists have not a complete case, and considering the dictates of history and immediate experience our assumptions should be optimistic. Our resilience, technology and energy argue the point.

Mr. Speaker, I have said this because I want to be constructive. However, I have had to assert that the positive is appropriate, that optimism is required, because the government would wish it otherwise. Since this House recessed this summer my party colleagues and many others sat down together for three days at Regina and for three days at Niagara Falls to assess the extent of the western agricultural crisis and what policies should be developed by the federal government. Some of our conclusions I would like to quote, and of one I would like to speak. The Regina conference on western agriculture stated as