

Alleged Failure to Aid Western Farmers

been pinching off the small butter producer in western Canada. I hear the same story in the maritimes, so apparently they are not setting their sights especially on us. I wonder if they know that the man who produces that can of cream is the same man who produces the calf which ends up in the feed lot where it is fed grain. They do not act as if they knew it. So, instead they pinch off the small producer, and we end up with a milk powder surplus in the central provinces of Quebec and Ontario, which is just as big a problem as the butter surplus once was.

What is our policy? This is what we should know. What about the recommendation of the task force that subsidies on feed grain moving east should not be continued? Is that what we should be doing at this juncture? When we are producing a surplus of grain in eastern Canada, do we want to re-equip the farmers in the maritimes and in the Atlantic provinces so they can produce grain also? Do we want them to go and buy combines and swathers and all the equipment that is needed to produce grain so that they can duplicate what we have now in the prairies, or does it make more sense, at least in the foreseeable future, to keep moving grain from where we are producing it and let farmers in the Atlantic provinces go ahead with poultry and livestock production? Essentially what they are doing is producing what they need in the area. Let us use some common sense and make our decisions on that basis. Some people say to me: "You are a westerner so you should not want feed grain to move east. You should want to feed it all in our own feed lot". This is utter nonsense. They will get the feed grain they want one way or another. If we cut it off, they will get it some place else. We will have a surplus but we will still produce hogs and cattle in competition with them. Do we want the market, or do we want to choke it off and leave it to corn producers in some other place? Do we want to duplicate the capital investment at a time when interest rates are at an all time high? If we are going to switch to some other production in western Canada, should we not make capital grants available to farmers who are willing and able to make the shift in terms of grazing land, in terms of feed lots and in terms of other developments, and should this not be done at reduced interest rates? Does the government think that the farmers in western Canada, with their present state of income and finances, will be able to raise the millions of dollars worth of capital to make the necessary adjustments?

[Mr. Gleave.]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): I regret to interrupt the hon. member but his time has expired.

Some hon. Members: Continue.

Mr. Gleave: I will be very brief, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say that if we are going to have to make some adjustments and if we are going to have to go back to growing, say, 20 million or 24 million acres of wheat, and if those lands are going to remain productive, a program will have to be devised. We are not at the end of the road. I am not pessimistic about western Canada, if we do the logical things that can be done. Perhaps I am an optimist because I have lived in that country all my life. It is productive and wealthy. It has been misused, abused and short changed, but it does not have to be broken.

Let us take a look at the alternatives, such as a good selling program for feed grains, oil seeds and livestock. Let the government dig out some money now, enough to meet the situation that exists there, and then work out a program with which we can live and move forward confidently into the future.

Mr. Cliff Downey (Battle River): It is very gratifying for me to be able to rise tonight to take part in a debate on a matter of such import and urgency as is the cash position of the western farmer. When I am out west I always try to paint a picture of a government composed of responsible and dedicated people, but when the house spends weeks on matters such as the omnibus bill and the language bill at a time of crisis in the west when farmers are going bankrupt every day, I have difficulty explaining it away. Westerners are asking me: "What is this government dedicated to and to whom is it responsible?"

I will not take the time to go over some of the aspects that the speakers before me have covered in relation to marketing problems and low quotas. I think these have been adequately covered. However, now in the west, on top of the other problems, we have a new situation which will affect the beef and the coarse grain growers. I refer to the widespread frost that occurred last week and that extended from the Peace River country to as far east as Brandon, Manitoba. Unless aid comes in in the next few weeks, these frozen crops, which in many areas are black and which have blackened the ground, will die, and trouble will be heaped on trouble. With no sales, debts will be heaped on debts. Credit sources are drying up, and money, when available,