

Supply—Agriculture

I fully agree with the hon. member for Fraser Valley East (Mr. Pringle) in the views he expressed so eloquently. I recognize also that the family farm unit is not on the way out. As a matter of fact, to support this view, I could give some examples taken within my own family.

If farmers in ever increasing numbers have left the land and if this situation still persists—I do not know if it started before or after the great depression, because all that happened before I was born—it is because these people were attracted by the easy gain they could find in the cities and because they were not prepared, as their predecessors were, to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow. And that is why, not all, but a good number of farmers quit the farm to go into exile in the city or, as it turned out in my area, in the United States. But, if the cause of that exodus is sought, we find that hundreds of those unproductive lands should never have been settled. That explains why the people who took them over never managed to make a living there. At times, they could barely support their families. Those lands should never have been settled; a mistake was made at the outset, the effects of which persist even today.

With regard to potato growers, they are now going through a critical period, a very critical seasonal period which recurs every year when the crop is brought in. The market is then at its lowest level. But what concerns me more is that the potato market, this year just like last year and the year before, will not improve enough to enable the farmer to get a decent price for his produce.

I said I was no expert in this regard, but I see farmers wondering how they will solve their problems, of which the marketing problem.

Some claim that they are being exploited by people commonly known as "brokers". I do not know whether they are right, but what I would like to know is why the governments do not look into the problem of the potato marketing.

New Brunswick has lost its traditional markets since the farmers in Quebec and in Ontario have decided to grow potatoes on a very large scale. The export market is also slipping through our fingers. The government cannot be blamed for other countries wanting to grow potatoes. But, indirectly, our farmers take the rap. Therefore, might the federal government be willing to create a commission

[Mr. Corbin.]

to set the prices and quotas for potatoes? Would the Minister of Agriculture agree to establish standards which would enable the producer to get a just price?

I know that a task force is making investigations in all areas related to agriculture, but I would like that task force to try to find a solution to the potato problem, as it did for other problems.

I read recently, in the weekly papers of my region, that a company in good repute intends to establish an industry to process potatoes. As you know, there is already, in my region, the McCains Foods Company, known all over the world. And now, the F. W. Piric Company is thinking of embarking upon the same kind of business.

This might help solve the problem of marketing, since the consumer these days prefers finished goods. I hope that the Department of Agriculture and the Departments of Industry and Trade and Commerce, by means of financial assistance whenever a request is made, may help people willing to help themselves and to set agriculture in their area on the road to prosperity.

It must have been evident, Mr. Chairman, that I am not an expert in farming. I simply wished to point out, with all due humility, the problems which the farmers in my area have to face, and I hope that the Minister of Agriculture will give the matter some thought.

[English.]

Mr. Horner: I should like to say a word or two before six o'clock, Mr. Chairman, on the urgent problem facing western Canada at this time and perhaps later this evening deal generally with the other problems facing agriculture. It is a fact well known to the Minister of Agriculture and to the house that there is an unusually large amount of damp grain in western Canada. Mr. McNamara has estimated the amount at 380 million bushels of wheat and the head of the federated elevator companies has estimated the amount as high as 800 million bushels of grain, including wheat, oats, barley and flax. Every farm newspaper one picks up, such as the *Co-Operator*, *The Western Producer* and *Farm and Country* is filled with comments on problems concerning the drying of grain. It is an obvious situation, but the government has moved reluctantly in the solving of it.

It is all very well for the hon. member for Fraser Valley to suggest that he would like somebody in this house to stand up and list the problems rather than ask for handouts.