

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S.O. 58—AGRICULTURE—CALL FOR GOVERNMENT POLICY

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert) moved:

That this House condemns the inadequate policies of the present government in agricultural areas and calls on the government to institute an agricultural policy which would:

- (1) implement a national stabilization plan available for all farm products and based on the cost of production and supported by producer and federal contributions;
- (2) encourage the establishment of national orderly marketing agencies for all farm commodities;
- (3) expand the role of a sufficiently-capitalized Farm Credit Corporation to include provision of short-term and long-term financing as well as operating costs for beginning farmers;
- (4) provide continuing emergency aid to farmers on the basis of cost-shared agreements negotiated in advance to avoid the problems associated with last year's drought and herd maintenance programs;
- (5) condemn the use of grain embargoes in Canadian foreign policy and pay immediate compensation to Canadian farmers who have waited for 17 months for payment on the Soviet grain embargo;
- (6) affirm the role of the Crownest Pass freight rate in developing western Canada by implementing Crow-related rates to move semi-processed and finished agricultural products; and
- (7) negotiate a land-use policy for Canada in conjunction with the provinces.

He said: Mr. Speaker, this is the second opposition day on agriculture this week and the week is only half over.

The Canadian Federation of Agriculture has stated that we are in a crisis situation in the agricultural industry. I say that what is happening in the agricultural industry these days is more than a crisis, it is a disaster. Therefore, it is very important that we have an opportunity to debate this subject in this House on the second day devoted to agriculture.

Farmers are going under at a fast rate. We have heard about many bankruptcies. When the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) spoke on Monday, he also referred to bankruptcies. Most farmers do not wait for bankruptcy; they sell out when they can still see some hope of getting out of the situation with a few dollars. Surprisingly, the inflated price of land has had something to do with farmers staying in business. With the price of a farmer's land rising almost on a daily basis, a farmer finds that he can always sell his land to pay off his debts.

To date the government has admitted to the existence of a crisis. The government has projected disaster in some areas but it has suggested only band-aid treatment, but now it seems to be running out of band-aids. The government is cutting back on some programs which have helped farmers. Agencies, such as the Farm Credit Corporation, have less money this year than last. In some cases, instead of applying a band-aid, the government is applying a tourniquet. We all know what happens if you leave a tourniquet on for too long—the limb eventually drops off. That is what is happening in certain parts of our agricultural industry today. I sometimes wonder wheth-

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er the government is trying to slip that tourniquet around the neck of the industry. Instead of solving the problem, it would eliminate that industry entirely.

● (1520)

The motion before the House is an omnibus motion. It covers many areas. There is good reason for that.

The approach of this government offers no real solution to the problem. This motion is an attempt to impress on the government the need for a co-ordinated approach to the crisis, which is, in fact, a disaster in agriculture. We need a planned and co-ordinated approach rather than a patchwork or band-aid approach. We need a plan which deals with high interest rates, the cost-price squeeze, high land prices, marketing problems, the emergency drought situation, transportation, rail line abandonment, and so on. We need Canadian foreign policy which does not use food as a weapon against the poor in other countries.

My party will be presenting some solutions to the crisis in agriculture. Some of our difficulties today are related to the failure of the stabilization program which has become a tattered patchwork quilt rather than insulating the farmer from the vagaries of the market place.

Many producers are upset by the recent decision not to pay hog support to producers receiving provincial support. Farmers in Saskatchewan will not receive hog support on their first 1,500 pigs. We agree with the government that an equitable national hog stabilization program is needed. However, the government has failed to provide that.

Farmers would support a national plan based on the cost of production rather than the present average market price with contributions by the federal government and the producers. This should be available for all commodities. The government should put its principles into practice. The Minister of Agriculture expounds these principles on a daily basis. Rather than just talking about orderly marketing, he should do something about it.

Plebiscites could be held under draft legislation which could be produced and debated, or the producers could have votes under the Farm Products Marketing Act to set up an agency for marketing of pork. New legislation might be required for beef. This would be a method of achieving lasting stability and fair prices.

The NDP motion seeks a policy which would put into place long-term stabilization plans. If an effective national stabilization plan is implemented, it must be based on certain principles. First, the program should be national to avoid provincial balkanization because some provinces produce more than others. Since agriculture is a shared responsibility, this will require provincial negotiations. Second, payments should be based on cost of production not on the average market price which may bear no relation to the cost of production. Third, the program should be funded by federal contributions and producer premiums, and payments should be quarterly. Fourth, a ceiling on eligibility should be included to discourage large scale corporate farms and encourage the family farm.