

Speech from the Throne

price of farm machinery? The government should be aware of the need to bolster the price of all grain sold in the market. The government should concern itself with developing a guaranteed annual income for farmers as well as all Canadians.

If I may digress for a moment, Mr. Speaker, I see the member for Bruce (Mr. Whicher) has given recognition to the fact that a certain group in Regina has named the minister in charge of the Wheat Board salesman of the year. Here in the eastern press that undoubtedly looks impressive. Well, we in Saskatchewan have seen Liberal politicians presented with this honour before. As a matter of fact, this award is usually a step along natural progression to political oblivion for Liberal politicians.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Or to the Senate; the same thing.

Mr. Knight: Lately the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) has been singing quite a tune about how this government is really committed to the concept of the family farm. It seems the task force report on agriculture will not be easily accepted by the farmers, and it certainly should not be. As usual the government is announcing some rather doubtful programs under some fancy sounding titles. For example, there is the small farms development program. How strange it is that such a well-titled program cannot seem to get the agreement of the provincial governments. The minister claims the program is to benefit the small farmer. I suggest this program, without considerable revision is merely a subtle means of carrying out the recommendations of the task force report. I challenge the minister to show this House how there will be the same number of farmers in Canada as there is now once the small farms development program is in operation. The minister knows that farm depopulation will continue as long as the farmer is caught in the cost-price squeeze and the government encourages small farmers off the land by allowing the Farm Credit Corporation to sell their land to existing farmers. There is no provision to enable a young man who is not farming to get the land.

• (1600)

One question that could be asked is: is there any restriction on agrabusiness or land speculators obtaining the land? This is not small farm development, but small farm consolidation, nothing more. The Minister of Agriculture has recently announced a \$5 subsidy on pigs to a maximum of 200, this is on pigs with a carcass quality of 100 or higher. The deficiency payment on hogs does not take into account some very important changes in the hog farming business since the Agricultural Stabilization Act was introduced in 1957-58. There have been a number of complaints from hog producers who have specialized in production of weanlings which they sell to feeders for finishing, but the deficiency payment is not related to them. Many small producers will not benefit because of the carcass quality of 100 ruling. In Saskatchewan the program does not take into account the many joint hog raising operations. How will the subsidy relate to an operation run by more than one farmer? I hope the minister will consider making some changes for the farmers who face these particular difficulties.

In the last year, the government introduced the grain income stabilization bill. The principle of stabilizing the grain income of farmers met with no barriers from anyone involved with agricultural policy. However, the program outlined by the government was totally unsatisfactory. The minister in charge of the Wheat Board (Mr. Lang) totally mishandled the bill in the House of Commons. The government, being committed by law to pay moneys under the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act, went ahead with a new plan and broke the law by withholding the payments to which they were committed. Now, that same minister is in charge of administering justice for all Canadians. What irony, Mr. Speaker. It seems that imposing injustice on western farmers is a prerequisite to being put in charge of administering justice on behalf of this government.

Let us examine what is wrong with the minister's grain stabilization policy. First of all, it is a disaster plan, not a stabilization plan. Pay-outs only come when the entire industry faces a disaster. The farmers in Assiniboia often suffer from drought while others in the prairie region do not. This plan was of no benefit to their particular circumstances. The plan begins in years when receipts were unusually low, thus making the possibility of a pay-out in the near future very limited. Furthermore, the farmers would no longer receive the dried-out bonus, as inadequate as it was and, secondly, the government was no longer committed to payment on the storage of wheat under the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act. The cost of storage would fall upon the farmers when prices for farm commodities were already too low. The most important drawback in the plan was the use of the gross income basis instead of net income or net cash receipts basis. Every farmer knows that you can have a high gross income, but it is how much you have left after you pay the bills that counts.

Mr. Yewchuk: Whose warmed over speech is that?

Mr. Knight: It is my own speech, my friend. The minister in charge of the Wheat Board may reintroduce the stabilization bill without revision, but I can assure him that the farmers of the prairie region will find it as unacceptable as before. Any grain income stabilization plan must consider rising costs of production and regional differences within the western provinces. There should also be provision for payment of storage costs of all grains under the Wheat Board jurisdiction.

The farmers in Assiniboia expressed grave concern over the transportation system which moves their products as well as handles their machinery from the east. It has been noted that the Canadian Freight Association has filed tariff No. 1003 to take effect on February 11, 1972. Freight rates are to be increased by 3 per cent to 8 per cent on about one third of the goods carried by the railways. In general, grain and grain product rates are subject to the increase, except statutory rates and traffic moving under agreed charges. Here is an example of what happens to a farmer's product when shipped. This is a letter from a farmer in the Riceton area which I received several months ago explaining what happened to a shipment of his malting barley. I should like to read it into the record.