

*Proceedings on Adjournment Motion*

There are 10,000 post offices in Canada. By comparison, the United States has only 30,000 post offices, although on a population ratio that country should have something like 100,000. In other words, the Canadian public is extremely well served with respect to the number and availability of post offices.

The present status of the program to review small post offices is as follows. The number of post offices closed to date, 1,240; number examined and retained, 1,208; number still to be reviewed, 1,450. This program will be completed on September 30, 1970.

NATIONAL REVENUE—REFUND OF SALES TAX  
ON GRAIN STORAGE EQUIPMENT

**Mr. Rod Thomson (Battleford-Kindersley):** Mr. Speaker, I hoped that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) would be answering my question this evening because I find it easier to get angry with him over the problems we have in western Canada; he should know how to solve our problems; the parliamentary secretary may not. I will try to be logical in my argument in the hope that it might have some influence on the parliamentary secretary.

I received a complaint from a farmer who had built grain storage facilities in Saskatchewan. He has discovered that he cannot get a tax rebate on this building because it is not the right style. I quote from his letter as follows:

—the building we erected was built primarily for grain storage and now holds over 25,000 bushels of wheat. The way the grain situation is now, this could be in there for another 10 years with what other wheat we have on hand and the quotas we are getting, even without seeding another wheat crop.

I ask the parliamentary secretary to note the following:

The provincial government recognized this as a grain storage building and we cannot understand the federal government's view of this.

I quote from another letter received from this person:

We believe that very few people in this economic situation would build a building costing this much to store machinery and let grain sit outside in piles and spoil. When this much more storage space is needed we feel it much wiser to build one large building than 12 to 14 small bins. We already have 17 other granaries varying in size and a 28' x 40' barn lowered and converted into a grain storage bin, all filled to capacity. To add another dozen small bins would be ridiculous.

[Mr. Loiselle.]

• (10:10 p.m.)

From the point of view of economics as applied to this farm, it makes more sense to erect one large building for the storage of grain than to buy several grain storage bins. From the answer given me by the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Côté), or an official of the department, it is not enough, apparently, that a bin should hold grain. It has to look like a grain bin and it should not be capable of use for any purpose but the storage of grain.

I wonder whether the government is serious when it professes to be willing to help farmers who are in trouble because they cannot sell their grain. The Saskatchewan government has recognized that bins of this type are adequate for storage. There is a method by which an individual can apply to his municipality for a permit enabling him to make application for a return of tax. In this case the farmer got a \$200 refund, the amount of the 5 per cent sales tax collected by the Saskatchewan government. Thus, one level of government recognizes the principle and I wonder why another level of government declines to do so.

It seems to me the Saskatchewan government acknowledges the seriousness of the situation on the prairies, while the federal government is only playing around. The federal government may not agree with this opinion, but this is what it amounts to. The government should take another look at these cases. Only one farmer has appealed to me, but after talking to other hon. members I know that other farmers are in the same difficulty.

The argument that the grain bins may be used for another purpose is a ridiculous one. No one with any knowledge of the economic situation on the prairies at the present time would believe that a farmer would put up special bins just for the sake of getting a tax rebate. Interest rates alone would rule this out. I maintain that when a farmer puts up a grain storage bin, whether it looks like a granary or not it should be accepted as such provided it holds grain. The Saskatchewan government recognized this principle when it returned the 5 per cent sales tax, and I can see no reason why the federal government should not carry out the intent of its promise to western agriculture in connection with this rebate.

I have one final comment. I am a farmer and if I were erecting another bin on my farm I would probably choose a quonset type