

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

attend a meeting of the F.A.O. I thank the Minister of Trade and Commerce for his courtesy in being present tonight to give me an answer to my question.

In reply to a related question put in support of mine by the hon. member for Rosethorn (Mr. Nasserden) the Minister of Trade and Commerce said: "Mr. Speaker, at the moment I am not anticipating making any announcement."

This is the kind of answer from those on the government side that necessitates members of the opposition, like myself, taking the floor at this time to make the strongest protest possible against the government's indifference to the present serious plight of farmers in western Canada.

One of the greatest economic and political boons that the present government has made in recent years was to allow the international world wheat agreement to lapse for a period of 11 months. This has done untold economic damage not only to Canadian farmers but also to farmers in other countries. As a basis for putting my question to the minister regarding a substantial increase in cash advances on farm stored grain let me quote from several of the items appearing in headlines in newspapers of current issues. I have here a copy of the *Regina Leader Post* date November 1, 1967. One headline reads: "Canada's Wheat Export Just Trickle", and it reads as follows":

World abundance and a free market have reduced Canada's three-year flood of wheat exports to a comparative trickle. Some prairie farmers, their bins overflowing with grain they can't deliver, are running short of cash.

The situation is getting serious, F. F. Hamilton, chief commissioner of the Board of Grain Commissioners, said Tuesday, "Our whole system is getting plugged up with wheat."

Mr. Hamilton said weekly export movements are only about half those in 1966 and the country's grain elevators are running out of storage space.

In the first 12 weeks of the current crop year which began Aug. 1, wheat exports amounted to 61,400,000 bushels. This was 92,300,000 behind 1966-67 and the slowest pace since 1955-56, when overseas shipments were 49,904,000 bushels in the first three months of the crop year.

It goes on to mention that quotas were only half of last year's at this time, and it continues:

James Richardson and Sons, Winnipeg grain merchants, noted in its weekly market letter that the maximum quota set by the Canadian Wheat Board for grain deliveries by farmers is two bushels an acre. At October 31, 1966 the maximum was four bushels an acre.

In other words, twice as much.

Another headline reads "Shipments Decline", and the text reads as follows:

In August and September, overseas shipments to China amounted to 2,739,000 bushels compared with 24,455,000 bushels in the same 1966 period.

Japan took 4,911,000 bushels compared with 7,878,000 in 1966.

Wheat prices have been on a downward slide for the last four months. In June, No. 1 northern was going at \$2.12 $\frac{5}{8}$ at the lake-head and on Tuesday it was \$1.91 $\frac{7}{8}$. In other words there was a drop of 20 cents. This is a problem not only in Canada, Mr. Speaker, but when you start looking at the newspapers from abroad you find other exporting nations are also expressing their fears. I noticed an article quoted in the *Manitoba Co-operator* for November 2 which is headlined, "Who Pushed the Panic Button?" The article reads:

A mild panic seems to have developed in official Washington circles over grain prices. Apparently, it's because present levels pose a serious threat to the administration—

Now, Mr. Speaker, I could go on to indicate something of the basis of these cash advances. I believe, however, that is well known to the house. This measure was introduced in 1957 to provide for the basic needs of the farmers at that time. I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that the same basic needs are now prevalent, perhaps even on a greater scale. I know that our time is limited, so I do not intend to take up too much time quoting from the act. I believe, however, that the terms are well known to hon. members.

Many western farmers now find themselves in dire financial straits as a result of the large pile-up of grain in the bins and shipping terminals, as well as the severe drop of 22 cents per bushel in wheat prices. I want to urge the Minister of Agriculture to introduce legislation at once to amend the prairie grain cash advance measure so that double the amount of cash may be made available to farmers at this time in order that they can meet their heavy commitments of higher taxes, higher fuel and repair costs, higher machinery costs and the heavy increase in the cost of living.

Hon. Robert Winters (Minister of Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, since this matter is administered through the wheat board, I expect that perhaps it is more properly under my jurisdiction than that of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Greene). However, this does