

Business of Supply

\$71 million. These might be acceptable cost factors if the grain were moving regularly, but they are intolerable when the system is clogged and no wheat is moving. This static condition emphasizes one of the worst features of the present system of marketing grain: a premium is placed on the storage of grain in Canada, not upon its sale. Consequently, there is no real incentive to move it.

• (4:50 p.m.)

We often hear it said that Canada is not pulling its weight in the area of aid to less developed countries. Certainly, when we look at the figures it would seem that our contribution is one of the lower ones. But really we are doing a terrific service to mankind inasmuch as we are storing over half the world's grain surplus. Canada, at a tremendous cost to her own economy, is one of the world's largest food banks. Canada, which grows approximately one twentieth of the world's wheat is storing over half the world's surplus. If that is not an important service to mankind, I have never seen one. But can we afford it?

As I have said before, since 1953 the grain producers and taxpayers of Canada have paid out almost a billion dollars for grain storage to the terminal elevator companies, in return for an antiquated system of grain storage, an empire which is basically the same as it was 50 years ago. In what other area of our economy can we find the standards of 50 years ago applying today? At our present rate of wheat sales we are only revolving our wheat stocks every four years, which means that total storage charges, including handling, interest, and so on, are costing Canadian taxpayers and grain producers between 80 cents and one dollar on every bushel. Let us not kid ourselves; we shall have to move this wheat even if we are obliged to take a little less on world markets. If we take a little less, the ECC could very well open up again as a market to us. At the present time the ECC is spending \$300 million a year subsidizing its agriculture; it might not stand this expenditure for long if there were a slight drop in our prices. When we maintain or raise our price above a certain level, other countries subsidize their wheat growers; if we remain below that level we can move ahead.

What we need is a government supported basic floor price for wheat. I spoke earlier of the importance of agriculture to the whole national economic picture. If our economy is to continue to progress we must keep agricul-

ture healthy. Many cut-backs have already been put into effect in agriculture and others are proposed. It was drawn to my attention the other day that support was to be withdrawn from straight-bred steer classes at the Edmonton exhibition next year. I cannot understand why we should be presented with cutbacks affecting agriculture while expenditures by other departments of government are increasing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member but I am afraid his time has expired.

Some hon. Members: Continue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to allow the hon. member to continue?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Downey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was saying that other departments have increased their expenditures. Take the Department of the Secretary of State (Mr. Pelletier). In the last five or six years expenditures there have risen from something like \$5 million to \$342 million. Consider the basic policy which the CBC has laid down! I quote from the annual report for 1968-69:

The Corporation's basic policy is that efforts to increase commercial revenues must not dominate program decisions.

Why should we have to put up with these cutbacks in agriculture in an area which we have shown to be so important to the Canadian economy while other departments are taking an entirely different attitude?

I shall not continue for much longer Mr. Speaker. As for the statement the minister made with regard to cutting down the practice of grain bootlegging, I say it is all very well for the minister in charge of the Wheat Board to make a virtue out of upholding the law, but it means nothing, and will accomplish nothing. If this country had been laid out properly to start with, the borders between Alberta and Saskatchewan and between Manitoba and Saskatchewan would not exist; this whole prairie region has, generally speaking, the same problems, the same topography and the same climate; it should be one province, under one administration.

It is all very well to talk about upholding the law. It is easy to make self-righteous statements, but it is something else for the farmer who must feed and clothe his family