

Government Wheat Policy

attach any importance, let it show us now in order that—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Let me remind the hon. member that this—Would the hon. member resume his seat? Let me remind hon. members that this is a procedural debate. The more of these speeches by hon. members I hear, the more I am confirmed in my opinion as to the ruling I should make in respect of this motion.

• (3:30 p.m.)

Mr. Downey: I offer my apologies, Mr. Speaker. I was only trying to impress upon the members on the government side of the house the real urgency of this matter. I can only say that if they ignore this urgent plea from the representatives of western Canada, our worst fears will become grim reality. I say that now is the time to act, not later.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. J. H. Horner (Crowfoot): Mr. Speaker, on the question of urgency of debate of the very serious situation in western Canada, I believe the house should consider it urgent because, first, of the economic conditions in western Canada today. Anybody doing business in the rural areas of western Canada realizes that the farmers have a drastic need for ready cash. Their damp grain is not moving.

We have many times urged the house to put the dryers at the terminals on a 24-hour basis, seven days a week. The government has decided not to do that. The President of the Privy Council suggested that this whole matter could be raised in the agricultural committee tomorrow when the chief of the wheat board will be before us. We are asking for a policy decision by parliament, not for a statistical review of wheat handling such as the chief commissioner of the wheat board can give us in the agricultural committee.

We want a policy decision by parliament, first, to activate the grain drying equipment at the terminals on a 24-hour basis, seven days a week. This is a policy decision that parliament and the government have to take. Second, we ask that the transportation committee look into the problem with regard to box cars. In the past two weeks members of this party and others have urged the government to look into the problem of box car shortages. No fundamental action has been taken by the government on this serious question. We want

a policy decision by the government to alleviate the serious problem with regard to box cars and their availability in order to move our damp grain.

Third, we want a policy decision by parliament and the government with regard to commercial dryers purchased by farmers or farm co-operatives. Today they have to pay duty of 22½ per cent on these dryers, which practically prohibits their importation. We believe these three policy decisions should be made by the government. They could be brought about today by having an active debate in the house on this serious matter.

On only two or three previous occasions has a motion to adjourn the house under standing order 26 been accepted by the Chair. One had to do with the drought-stricken conditions in eastern Canada a number of years ago and another with the problems on the St. Lawrence seaway a number of years ago. I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that this question is every bit as urgent, particularly in light of the statement made on television last night by the chief of the wheat board on two of the matters to which I have referred. I would like to think that you, sir, and the government feel that western Canada is every bit as important as eastern Canada, the drought-stricken conditions of a few years ago in that area and the problems on the St. Lawrence seaway of a few years ago.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Starting at the end, I would say that the arguments advanced by the hon. member for Crowfoot have very little relevance to the procedural aspects of this matter and I cannot consider them at all in reaching the decision which I am now going to give to the house. Very serious arguments have been advanced by hon. members who have taken part in the debate. It is not an easy task for the Chair at any moment to reach a decision on standing order 26. I gather that the special committee on procedure has been giving very special consideration to changing the conditions under which that standing order operates, which would, I believe, have the effect of making it much easier for the Chair to reach a decision and to take into account the views advanced by hon. members in such circumstances.

Hon. members know that what we have to consider at this time is not at all the urgency of the matter. Although I do not come from the western provinces, I fully realize how important and urgent this matter is. I have been in the house every day, of course, since