

*Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act*

things were not good but that there was no emergency. After hearing this statement I am sure that when he assessed the situation in Manitoba he must have just walked round the Winnipeg Airport and looked at the situation from there. I know I was alarmed when he made that statement. I know the majority of the crop in the Winnipeg area was under water. The majority of the crop in western Manitoba was still in the swath and getting wetter each day.

Finally, in late November the Wheat Board announced a special three bushel quota for damp grain. By this time the majority of wheat was testing anywhere from 20 to 21 or higher. However, in October this same grain was testing around 17 or 18. Why did the government not take action then? They were told of the situation, Mr. Speaker, and we all know that grain is far easier to dry at 17 or 18 than it is at 21 or higher.

Another question I would like to ask is, why did it take so long to get the drying facilities at the Lakehead operating on a 24 hour seven day a week basis? Surely the government must have felt concern, and could have made some attempt to solve this problem sooner. By January we heard questions being asked as to why more dryers were not being used. Any farmer will tell you it is an expensive proposition to dry grain when the weather is 25 or 30 degrees below zero.

I stated earlier that I am in favour of the advance to assist farmers in drying grain. But this government must realize that credit is not the answer to the problems of agriculture in Canada today. Right now many areas of Marquette have not even had a one bushel quota for dry grain, and here we are at the end of January. How much longer does the government think our farmers can exist on yearly quotas of five and six bushels? Our farmers need drastic action by the government to face up to the problems confronting agriculture. Let us have more aggressive efforts made to sell our grain. How can we expect the Wheat Board to be concerned about wheat sales when the Prime Minister makes statements such as he did in Winnipeg when he said "why should I sell wheat?" The government has to show leadership and direction to the whole agricultural industry, and it is time they got on with the job.

We have all heard now about the deplorable situation that exists at Vancouver with the large number of boats waiting for dry grain. Here again the government was slow in acting. It took a special debate on agriculture

[Mr. Stewart (Marquette).]

last January 22, proposed by members of the official opposition, to get the grain moving. Why, within 24 hours of that debate, were trains moving out of Moose Jaw with No. 2 northern wheat? It was the prodding of the members on this side of the house that was responsible.

Again I say that credit is not the whole answer to our agricultural problems. It is time the government reviewed the serious situation facing the farmers of Canada and came up with a concrete agricultural policy so that the farmers can also share in the so-called just society that this government has advocated.

• (2:50 p.m.)

**Mr. Ed Schreyer (Selkirk):** Mr. Speaker, I presume the minister would close the debate if he spoke now so I should like to make some comments with respect to Bill C-162.

Like the previous speaker I find I must support this bill because it does offer some measure of financial assistance to the wheat producers of western Canada. But surely it cannot be said that the bill is of any substantial significance relative to the size of the problem faced by the prairie grain producers. I listened with interest to the remarks made earlier today with respect to this bill by the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) and others. I find that this government has indeed been guilty of sins of omission. By mid-October of last fall it had become evident that the harvest situation on the prairies was extremely bad, from which it might have been assumed that a large part of the harvest would be out of condition. Nevertheless, in the two months from mid-October to the end of the year no real effort at co-ordination was made by the government or by any of its agencies to cope with the situation. It is only now, at the end of January, that any systematic effort is being made to get a sufficient number of grain dryers together and distribute them proportionately in the areas where there is need.

The question could be asked: why was the government so nonchalant about this problem throughout November and December? The weather now is cold; there has been a cold spell on the prairies since mid-January. I would imagine that the amount of drying taking place at the country elevators and on the farms is small. It is a pity that the months of November and December were wasted. It can be said without exaggeration that the government must take the blame for the fact that out of the 200 million bushels of grain which