

*The Address—Mr. Diefenbaker*

bushels already threshed are in the fields becoming damper with each passing day. This situation amounts to a catastrophe to the western farmer, the like of which has not been experienced in my time; and I believe it demands the serious attention of parliament. Freight cars are unavailable. Branch lines are denied any marketing service whatsoever. In town after town wheat is piling up. No market is available because of the fact that box cars are not available. The answer given by the minister is this: There are sufficient box cars; the crop is being moved at an unequalled rate. Yet the situation continues almost stabilized in its severity.

Three weeks ago I pointed out to the minister that some 528 elevators were plugged. He replied that there was nothing to that statement, that he had no figures which indicated more than one-third that number. The situation is that in practically every town in parts of Saskatchewan the elevators are plugged and the wheat crop that is in the fields is depreciating. The government says ample cars are available. Then who is responsible for the mess in which western agriculture finds itself today?

One cannot put maps on *Hansard*, but I have before me the latest record showing that the grain tie-up is becoming desperate on the prairies. Hundreds of places are marked in red upon this map indicating elevators without market facilities; and the situation is not waning to any extent. Last week 663 elevators of the pool were plugged. This week the number is some 643. Those are the highest figures in recent years. As I see it, Mr. Speaker, the time has come to do something that has not been done heretofore in connection with this matter. The Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe) said the responsibility for allocation was on the wheat board. If the responsibility for having disseminated marketing areas is on the wheat board, then let this house speak to the wheat board through the mouth of the minister and demand action. I think the fact that this responsibility rests on the wheat board points up the fact that a majority of the members of the wheat board should be producing farmers. This is something we have asked for over the years, but it has been denied us. At this time I think something might well be done by the controller to assure that, if there is a surplus of freight cars on one of the railway systems, they be made available to the other; for certainly on the C.P.R. lines the situation is manifestly worse than it is on the C.N.R. lines.

The third thing I suggest is that even at this time, with tens of millions of bushels of threshed grain out in the fields, something be done to encourage the farmer to

build storage. Storage could be built today if the farmer was given the same incentive to build and the same payment that is made by the wheat board to the elevator companies.

The fourth suggestion is this: Many farmers are in the position today that they have no marketing opportunities whatsoever. Municipalities are unable to collect taxes. The storekeeper is asking that something be done. I suggest that if it is difficult to provide for government guaranteed bank loans against the grain that is in the fields, one way of getting around that difficulty would be to provide for such government guaranteed bank loans to the extent of \$10 an acre. Enormous quantities of wheat are on the prairies and will be destroyed whenever climatic conditions warm up, unless something is done.

I think the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. McCann) made a worth-while suggestion today when he said that in so far as drying machinery is concerned, it will be allowed into Canada provided that it is on loan for a period of six months. That will go part of the way, but it does not go as far as it should, as was pointed out by the hon. member for Souris (Mr. Ross), who asked that the same consideration be given to co-operative and other organizations that are in a position to provide drying facilities. Even at this time I think the Minister of National Revenue might reconsider his decision of this afternoon, to the end that provision may be made to enable all of the drying machinery available to be brought into this country without the necessity of there being any payment of customs duties, provided that it is reshipped to the United States after being used.

All kinds of explanations have been given as to why western Canada is in the position it is. Well, one of the main reasons is—

**Mr. Weir:** The weather.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** One of the main reasons is that the government failed to act in May, June and July when there was a realization of the great crop that was expected, with 90 or 100 million bushels of damp wheat still glutting the western elevators. I remember bringing up the matter on several occasions and requesting the minister to do something to remove the wheat from the prairies and so provide storage. The answer was always the optimistic one, to the effect that all would turn out all right. Finally, in their desire to pass the responsibility on to someone else, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner), speaking in Saskatoon, said the responsibility for the situation rested upon the western farmer, that his agricultural techniques would have to be changed accordingly. If the minister could read some of the letters I have