

Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act

22 ships waiting to load wheat from the prairie. No wonder the people of Eston are writing to the Wheat Board about their situation.

We do not lack—and I am sure the government does not lack—good advice from people in western Canada in regard to this crisis. I have referred to remarks made by the president of the National Farmers Union and also the president of the Saskatchewan Farmers Union, who like myself has operated a farm in that area. I also have before me a statement by Mr. Gibbings, president of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, who has also farmed in this same area and knows the needs of the farmers.

According to Mr. Gibbings, depressed prices and sales resulted in reducing shipments by some 200 million bushels during the past year, and this made it necessary for the government—this was a year ago—to institute a floor price. Mr. Gibbings goes on to suggest guaranteed domestic prices for wheat. He also underlines the effect that this industry has upon the Canadian economy. Canadian wheat farmers during the past year bought petroleum products, machinery, fertilizers and pesticides, as well as having repairs made, to a total value of \$522 million. If purchases of this magnitude are to continue we must ensure that the farming industry remains viable.

As I said, I hope the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce will meet and talk with people such as Mr. Gibbings, Mr. Atkinson and the farmers. During a discussion we had in this house the other day two of the ministers opposite took exception to the attitude of some members on this side who come from western Canada. We were accused of seeking publicity. I am not interested in publicity; I am interested in seeing grain moved. It was also suggested that we were panicking. It takes quite a bit to panic me. Anyone who has farmed on the prairies for as long as I have does not get excited too easily. I have lived in good times and bad and know the difference between utter disaster and good fortune from one year to another. So we do not panic too easily. But the situation to which I refer is serious, and by some means or other the government must be made to realize that it is serious.

● (12:50 p.m.)

Finally, I hope the farmers will avail themselves of the provision of this legislation, even if by so doing they will go deeper into debt. It costs more than 10 cents a bushel to dry grain. From my experience in the drying of grain I have found that it costs between 15

[Mr. Gleave.]

cents and 18 cents a bushel to custom-dry grain. I hope that millions of bushels of valuable grain are not allowed to go out of condition and thus be lost to the people of Canada and the world. For that to happen would be a blot on Canada. Our farmers and the government ought not to allow grain to go out of condition when the expenditure of a little money would prevent that happening.

Some in this country say that the condition of the grain is the farmers' problem. After all, it is his wheat; he grew it and if he sells it he will obtain money for it. He is like any other entrepreneur. Let him carry the load; let him worry about it and let him accept his responsibilities. In answer to such an attitude one can only say that in some circumstances the responsibilities weighing on farmers ought to be borne in part by the general public. In any event I submit that the government would have been fully justified in saying: Look, we will contribute 10 cents per bushel toward the cost of drying but the farmer will have to pick up the rest of the tab. The government ought to assist the farmers because they face a tight economic situation and cash is short. There is no prospect that the present situation will be corrected in the immediate future.

Finally, I urge the government to take every step to make sure that we can supply all our potential markets. We ought to have grain in export positions so that when a customer shows up and wants grain all we have to say: Here is our product on the shelf, it is yours, please give us your money.

[Translation]

Mr. C.-A. Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, I shall be brief, but I want to say a few words on the bill which bears the following recommendation:

His Excellency the Governor General has recommended to the house the present measure to amend the Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act so as to provide emergency advance payments—

This measure will answer the needs of the western farmers.

Mr. Speaker, we are, of course, in favour of this Bill No. C-162 which offers farmers advance payments for their grain in order to help them save the balance of last year's crop.

We understand all the difficulties that the three Prairie provinces had last year. This makes us pause a little, we of the East, because we notice that misfortune does not always strike in the East. It often happens that the western farmers have also their