

Agricultural Policies

our whole agricultural situation in the grains industry has been put right. On the transportation side, this government has recently witnessed the creation of the block system, with co-ordinators at Thunder Bay and Vancouver to ensure the most efficient use of the existing transportation system. We have stepped up the activity and participation of trade commissioners throughout the world who are involved in the wheat selling process. Hon. members opposite frequently seem not to know how much freedom of action the Wheat Board has, or about its agents throughout the world who are involved in the selling of wheat on its behalf. We have recently examined a report from the quota system committee. It has looked at the quota system which has a direct effect upon the efficiency and therefore income of the grain farmer. The system had not been looked at for many years and it deserved looking at. Action will be taken.

We have set up additional studies into the research facilities available. We have faced up to the question of inventory. Hon. members opposite are extremely unready to even face the question of whether it is right to ask what the inventory of grain and the level of grain storage in Canada ought to be. We saw that it was necessary to ask those questions and to have them answered. The government saw fit to make available \$100 million to assist in the attempt of bringing down the inventory of wheat, which was particularly large, to reasonable proportions.

The sum of \$100 million is not an insignificant amount, although hon. members opposite have referred to it as a small crumb. The Lift program will put many millions of additional dollars into the hands of prairie farmers this year. There will be a very marked reduction of wheat acreage and a marked increase of minimum maintenance and forage acreages to take up the money which is available under the Lift program. This money is in addition to the money which otherwise would go to the grain farmers from the expected sales of their products, because these sales of grain will be coming forward with ever-increasing vigour. In these ways the income position of farmers is being improved. But above all, we are facing the question of how to tackle these problems properly.

One of the major issues now before us for consideration is the question of the transportation and handling system. Yet once again, Mr. Speaker, I gravely fear that opposition

[Mr. Lang.]

members will be taking a negative and fear-sowing approach to this matter instead of attempting to see what ought to be the best approach to the issue of transportation and handling. Some of the references which have been made to the press and statements indicate that. Hon. members opposite surely must agree that we are taking the right approach. We say that we ought to analyse the cost of alternative systems of transportation to propose to producers, that they ought to know what the costs of the alternatives are, that we should in every way pass on to the producers the benefit which can flow from an alternative system. The producers have the right to know the differences between the existing system and the proposed system. Hon. members opposite would sooner see us remain static and never change. They do not want us to face the issue of studying the question at all.

I do not believe that is good enough. I do not believe the grains industry can afford to carry 500 million bushels of wheat above any commercial need at a probable cost to the industry of \$50 million a year. Do hon. members opposite think that money should be thrown away and not go to the agricultural producers? I do not think those producers will want to throw away cents per bushel on an inefficient handling system if an efficient handling system is available to them. Surely hon. members realize that we are simply seeking the opportunity to present to producers an analysis of what alternatives are available and what the benefits will be.

● (3:50 p.m.)

I wish to underline that there should be no doubt about this. It is my firm belief that we must examine the alternatives in handling systems. We must analyse the possible costs and benefits to the producers. Because the producers will have to accept any changes in the system which may ensue, it is up to them to decide which system is right. It is also important that the benefits from a changed system flow back to the producers. The catalogue of what we are doing to solve the problems that exist should surely convince members opposite, as step by step it is persuading the farmers, that the government is trying to come to grips with the real problems facing the grains industry of this country. Surely this should make hon. members opposite want to withdraw words that appear in this motion