

Assistance to Western Farmers

I suggest this is a matter which could best be dealt with in a debate such as that proposed by the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar. There are several problems. There is the problem of tough and damp grain, the question of assistance to farmers who are unable to harvest their crop, and the need to further encourage and assist the Canadian Wheat Board in respect of the sale and export of grain. Therefore I urge that the motion be allowed and that we have a debate on this subject.

Mr. R. R. Southam (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I have no alternative but to rise in the house at this time to support the motion brought forward by the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar and so eloquently supported by the hon. member for Lisgar and the right hon. member for Prince Albert.

As you mentioned, Mr. Speaker, we as members have been putting questions to the ministry opposite regarding this serious situation that has been developing. We have seen the legislation which was earlier placed on the agenda for debate sidetracked on many occasions. Day by day the situation becomes worse. I think it is high time the regular business of the house is adjourned so we might debate this urgent matter.

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that on a number of occasions motions similar to that which is before the house, having to do with a situation of national importance, have been allowed. Although it would seem that little purpose would be served by a motion of this nature in respect of crops that will not be harvested in some areas, I suggest the statement by the minister on behalf of the government is an indication that the Canadian Wheat Board intends to take only the normal action it is empowered to take in the circumstances.

Your Honour will remember that on a number of occasions concessions have been made to the wheat farmers in western Canada. If we are to override the quota system the wheat board has in use we must be in a position to permit the treatment of damp grain by the use of all our transportation facilities and the rerouting of the grain in the area. It seems to me this is something parliament could do by giving a direction.

[Mr. Burton.]

• (3:00 p.m.)

Because of the national interest in this matter I believe this motion should be allowed so that other steps can be taken in addition to those outlined by the minister, which I think we all welcome but which we all know will not solve the total problem. Surely parliament can give some direction in respect of changing quotas, and today is the day I suggest that we should give that direction.

Mr. Speaker: Let me suggest to hon. members that nothing that has been said following the motion by the hon. member has really changed the situation. I am still as convinced as I was in the first instance that this is a serious matter, and urgent; and if hon. members will allow me to do so I am prepared at this time to express an opinion and make a ruling.

I fully appreciate how urgent the matter is and how important the situation is to the country, and to members of this House of Commons. The decision before the Chair at the moment is whether the ordinary business of the house should be set aside for the purpose of discussing this situation. I must consider whether, within the near future, there will be an opportunity for hon. members to discuss this matter.

Reference has been made to the farm legislation which has come before the house and will come before it again later on. I am not necessarily impressed by this argument, but it seems to me that when we reach the budget discussion, which is a very general debate of much the same nature as the debate on the address in reply to the speech from the throne, there will be a number of days for hon. members to discuss this most important and urgent situation. I think that might be a very good opportunity to go into this matter.

If there were a delay in reaching this debate perhaps the motion could be made again and further considered, but because of the fact that within a short period of time there will be this general debate I think it would not be proper for the Chair to allow a debate at this time.

[Translation]

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Yves Forest (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, notice of motion No. 14 is agreeable to the government, subject to the usual reservations with regard to confidential papers and