

indecision because the minister outlined all of the things that should go into determining a solution, but he was not able to come up with any solutions or recommendations for action.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, it was a speech of confusion. First of all he misinterpreted some of the remarks and suggestions made by my leader. For instance, he said that to resign, as was suggested by my leader, would be to abdicate his responsibilities. I suggest that my leader, the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Douglas), suggested that the minister should resign because he has abdicated his responsibilities. It is time we had some action, otherwise there is no other course open to the minister.

Then, the minister took it upon himself to recite a list of items that he said the government had carried out in order to assist the agricultural industry. He described these as transitional help, as first aid to the agricultural industry. In my view the list that the minister presented to the house was more in the nature of a recitation of a litany associated with last rites. If he suggests that this in any way is dealing with the problem, I am afraid he is badly mistaken.

I do not intend to go over all the points he mentioned, but I do wish to refer to a few of them in order to illustrate the barrenness of the approach by the minister. He suggested that the P.F.R.A. and crop insurance payments made this year were part of the first aid program. But, Mr. Speaker, those are programs that are in existence, and for the most part, they merely give out money paid in by the farmers themselves. They are programs that are necessary, but these are not programs designed to deal with the problems we have at the present time.

The minister suggested that the authorities were entertaining applications for deferment of repayment of Farm Credit Corporation loans. This is certainly necessary in view of the inaction of the government. The minister may think he can fool some of the members of this house but I assure him he cannot fool the farmers. They are certainly not going to believe that sort of proposition.

Finally, he suggested that the three bushel over delivery quota introduced last fall was part of the program of assistance to agriculture. This is the final straw, Mr. Speaker. This statement is in direct contradiction to statements made in this house by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce when he admitted that an error was made in the way in which that program was introduced. This

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error, in great measure, accounted for the problems experienced by western agriculture over the last few months. Now, we have the minister, thrashing about in the dark, presenting this particular item as one of the things done by the government to solve the serious agricultural situation in the west.

The Liberal government's handling of agricultural problems over the last year can be summed up in two points. The first is that there has been the greatest combination of bungling and mismanagement ever witnessed in the conduct of agricultural affairs. The second is that the government's refusal to take action up to this time to relieve the economic crisis facing western farmers represents a striking example of callous indifference on the part of government. Federal Liberal failure to take action on the western farm crisis has brought the prairie agricultural economy to the verge of bankruptcy. Lack of price supports, ineffective marketing policies, and bungling of the damp grain situation represent the greatest combination of errors ever committed by a Canadian government in so short a time on a major problem.

There is no need to review in detail at this time the story of the handling of the damp grain situation. Suffice it to say that from the start of the session last September the government adopted a wait and see attitude. Then, when it became clear that something had to be done, the government panicked and steps were taken to introduce a three bushel over delivery quota for damp grain. It is now commonly acknowledged that this was a bad error. No assistance was provided by the government in meeting this emergency. Now the government claims that the problem is gone. It reminds me of the phrase used in discussing some problems, "In the long run the problem will be solved." In the same way, Mr. Speaker, in the long run we are all dead.

Similarly, the government closed its eyes to the transportation problem as it developed. Despite repeated warnings in this house and from farm organizations the government twiddled its thumbs and said that everything was going all right. As long ago as last December 12, Saskatchewan Wheat Pool directors pointed out:

There is a danger that the system carrying grain from the prairies to the terminal elevators will be clogged up very badly with out of condition grain, thus Canada may not be able to meet some of its export commitments requiring shipment of dry grain.