

Wheat Export Prices

have to agree with what the hon. member said in respect of such action, because certainly we cannot condone that type of manner among us, let alone to the man who holds the high office of Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). Really, what we witnessed in Saskatchewan was an inept Prime Minister in confrontation with an infuriated people.

• (10:20 p.m.)

What bothers me is that the week before last when we were denied the right to have this debate before the Prime Minister left for the West, he called the debate on the fundamental rule changes a stupid filibuster. He called the question period, which is intended to prod the government and keep it on its toes, a waste of time. In view of this he should not expect anything but the kind of abuse he got when he goes out to meet a public which cannot find the answer to its problems. It is about time the Prime Minister understood this because he is goading Canadians facing these problems to action which might well be more serious than what we have witnessed. Unless there are solutions to their problems we may see something more drastic than we have seen in the past. There is an agricultural crisis in the country far greater than anyone has suggested from the other side of the house, except perhaps the last speaker, that hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Douglas).

An hon. Member: This is a crisis in the world.

Mr. Thompson: It may be a crisis in the world, but right now we are concerned with the Canadian farmer. The Canadian Federation of Agriculture stated this very well at its last meeting in Calgary a few days ago. Let me quote from a press release that came out of that meeting:

—Their review of the deteriorating grains market situation and of the income situation in the country has served only to add strength and urgency to already overwhelming evidence that immediate and very substantial action must be taken by the federal government. The disastrous income losses being suffered by western farmers and the western economy demand cash assistance now and very early initiation of action plans for the longer run. The seriousness of this situation cannot be over-emphasized.

I am shocked tonight that the Minister of Agriculture, (Mr. Olson) is not even here for this debate. He was here long enough to make his own speech, but he was not even here at all this afternoon. This crisis is worthy of far more action than his remarks tonight which

were related strictly to the immediate cash crisis. It is also an interesting fact that the Minister of Agriculture when he talks about this problem today is talking in an altogether different language than the language he used when he sat with me in another section of this chamber. It would be very interesting to put the speeches he made then and the speeches he makes now alongside each other. He certainly speaks in support of policies which according to his earlier speeches were not acceptable then.

An hon. Member: You also sound different.

Mr. Thompson: What I am saying tonight is what I have always said about this farm crisis and I will have to continue to say it until some different agricultural policy comes forth from the government. Let me quote from an editorial which appeared in the *Ottawa Citizen* on July 18. This is not a newspaper which is known to criticize the government. The editorial reads:

The wheat farmer today is not in the situation of the Indian, the Métis or the fisherman. For these latter groups, poverty and low income are entrenched in their way of life: The challenge to society is to change that way of life.

The wheat farmer, on the other hand, is like a man hit by a tornado, a flash flood or other natural disaster. His fortunes have been spectacularly reversed overnight. He possesses a viable, highly developed business operation—and his problem is to keep it from going under in this crisis period.

Those are correct words, and that is why the right hon. Prime Minister is wrong when he tries to make a comparison for the benefit of those people down east who are facing trouble of an altogether different nature. The editorial continues by giving Dominion Bureau of Statistics figures in relation to the situation in respect of farms:

(D.B.S. figures give some indication of the impact of the trade slump to date: In the first quarter of this year, wheat farmers received \$94.3 million for delivery of their wheat, plus another \$27.1 million in clean-up payments, compared to \$154.2 and \$77.2 million a year earlier, and a total of \$392.2 million in 1967).

No country can afford not to make a financial set-back of these proportions a top, emergency priority, however anxious its government is to balance the national accounts. The alternative which is no alternative at all, is to see an industry, or a goodly part of it, wiped out overnight—and to create displacements that will endure long into the future.

I submit these comments and say to hon. members opposite who do not even have the politeness to listen to what is being said, that it is not only a short range problem that