

Alleged Failure to Aid Western Farmers

am trying to say the Canadian government should not be condemned for not being able to prevent something which exists on a worldwide level.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Order. I regret to interrupt the minister but I must remind him that his time has expired. Unless the house gives unanimous consent the minister will not be able to continue his speech.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Agreed.

[English]

Mr. Pepin: I will not be too long. I know that some hon. members on the other side are sleepy. They have been working very hard. This is my fourth speech today and I am in great shape.

Let us have a look now at Canadian exports. They will be in excess of 300 million bushels in the current crop year. Last year they were 335 million bushels, only slightly above the 1958 to 1962 five year average of 323 million bushels. Again, Mr. Speaker, when one judges a situation one must judge it against something which is rather normal, and not something which is exceptional. I dare say that from 1963 to 1967 Canada enjoyed extraordinarily good wheat sales but there is nothing in Adam's will—and I have read it—which says that the Soviet Union is obliged to have crop difficulties every year to assist the Canadian farmers. So, we must judge the present on an average basis, and the average sales for the five year period 1958 to 1963 were 323 million bushels, which is about what we are reaching now.

Had the Soviet Union come forward and taken the 135 million bushels outstanding under its present agreement with us, or had it taken only half of that, say 75 million bushels, this year would have been a very good year. Again, I do not see why the leader of the N.D.P. should condemn the government for its bad performance in wheat marketing. I think that the record has to be put in proper perspective.

I would have had many other remarks to make tonight, Mr. Speaker. In my concluding series I was going to show again that this is not an exclusive Canadian problem. It is a worldwide situation. The market is not what it used to be two, three or five years ago. Competition in the market has become ferocious. There have been bumper crops all over

[Mr. Pepin.]

the world. It is a buyer's market. A number of countries that used to be importers have become self-sufficient; a number of countries that used to be self-sufficient have now become small exporters. I agree with the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Gleave) who said that now we must govern our conduct in the light of more normal sales, and not in the light of exceptional ones.

In concluding, I also would have loved to talk about the I.G.A., and to answer some of the points made by the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) in particular. When I listen to him I always think that if wind and words could do it he would be really tops. I would have liked to speak about the history of the I.G.A. and of the great efforts made in recent times by Canada to protect the international arrangement despite difficult and changing circumstances.

I would have liked to have talked about our officials going to Canberra, to Washington and to London to defend the I.G.A.; about the minister meeting with the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, as did the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) also. I would have liked to have spoken about my meeting with the Minister of Commerce of Australia (Mr. McEwan), and with the Ministers of Trade and Agriculture of Japan. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) met with President Nixon and Prime Minister Gorton, and representations were made to France and the E.E.C. We have tried everything possible to maintain this great international agreement which is in Canada's best interests.

If the I.G.A. fails it will not be because Canadians have not stood behind it. It will not be because Canadians have not paid the price of maintaining it. It is easy to say on this 17th day of June that this is not the way the agreement should have been written, that it should have been negotiated differently. That is a lot of hindsight, which is about the cheapest commodity on the Canadian market at present.

I would have ended by enumerating the different recommendations that the government has received. Tonight, the hon. member for Crowfoot came up with a list of nine. I would have tried to show the difficulty attached to each of them. I would have shown that most of these coins have two sides. I would have tried to bring to the attention of the house and of the Canadian population that there are some disadvantages in most of these recommendations. But as the Minister of Agriculture said this afternoon, the government is considering all these aspects and