

Withholding of Grain Payments

international situation is far more responsible, and the government has no control over that.

Who is responsible for the collapse of grain prices and for the accumulation of stocks in Canada? Plagued with production surplus, several countries forgot the agreements they had signed in order to maintain a minimum price for grain and they reduced prices to sell on export markets.

On the other hand, supported by members of the opposition and urged by farmers to resist the price war, Canada maintained its prices. But after a few months, we had lost the markets we had gained and the government had to pay storage costs for more than a billion bushels of unsold grain.

When 80 per cent of a production as important as that of grain rely on international market conditions because it is mostly exported, one can only expect instability and the government took measures to encourage reduction of wheat acreage in order to balance production and opportunities to sell at the reasonable price farmers would be ready to accept. In fact, we cannot secure a price for the producers when it is not possible to find a buyer at a reasonable price. There cannot be forever government grants to support prices when there is absolutely nobody to buy those commodities.

● (10:40 p.m.)

Let us have a look at the job done by the Canadian Dairy Commission. It took four years to clean up the market, to balance supply and demand and I recognize that now, in spite of some difficulties, the Canadian milk producers can at least rely on stability and on a better income. Since the beginning of this year there have already been four improvements in the policies of the Canadian Dairy Commission and we hope there will be some more before the end of the present dairy year. This results from the application of discipline to production, which has enabled us to strengthen markets and therefore to get better prices for producers.

We shall get the same results in the grain industry, if ever the opposition stops stirring up the population, western producers especially—I even dare say telling direct lies to farmers—by making them believe that we are against them and want to destroy them.

The facts are quite different. There is a sizable number of us here, all equally convinced of the need to protect the western grain industry as well as the dairy industry of the East, and as an hon. member from eastern Canada, I can assure the House that we are just as interested in the success of the western farmers, since the Canadian economy is such that if the West is doing well the East will also be prosperous. The fact that western farmers have not been altogether as prosperous as we would have wished in the past years has had very deep repercussions on the agricultural industry of the east; this is why we show today surplus of several types of goods, and why we must seek formulas likely to restore the balance.

Mr. Speaker, I dare the members of the opposition to show sincerity for once and I ask them to put an end to

[Mr. Lessard (Lac-Saint-Jean).]

their filibustering of Bill C-244, and even Bill C-176, so that we pass them as quickly as possible.

I suggest that we put an end to this debate and that, with unanimous consent, we may tomorrow consider Bill C-244, so as to pass it as quickly as possible, so that the western farmers may benefit from it. It is pointed out that this bill only provides for the allotment of \$40 million and it is a fact. The minister said so. But if such is the case, it means at least an additional amount of \$40 million and consequently, we would be ill-advised not to pass that legislation, even if some find it defective. Moreover, if anyone feels that it is bad, let him vote against it. We should be left to assume the responsibility of passing a bad piece of legislation, which would be agreeable to those who are dissatisfied. We are ready to accept that responsibility, if you really think that this is bad legislation. As for us, we believe that it is good and we will assume our responsibilities before our constituents at the next election. However, if the legislation is bad, the better it will be for you, since you will be more easily elected and we will thus be judged and rejected. You will then assume leadership of the government and the country, if you think you can do better.

If you do not accept this proposal—and I see that several members agree with me—this will be evidence of your lack of sincerity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. The Chair is not going to let the hon. member know that his time is up, but simply to ask him to please follow the normal procedure and address his remarks to the Chair rather than directly to hon. members.

Mr. Lessard (Lac-Saint-Jean): I apologize for losing my temper a bit, it is not my habit.

If the opposition does not approve that proposal, it shows in my view a lack of sincerity. On the one hand, it says to the government: You are doing nothing to help farmers and, on the other hand, when the government proposes through the cabinet measures designed to benefit agriculture, this same opposition hastens to unite against the government to denounce it and systematically check the adoption of those efficient laws.

I wonder if one cannot call such behaviour if not dishonesty, at least sadism. I think that the hold outs thus add to the difficulties of the western farmers by opposing adequate measures to help them at last.

As to myself, I have the duty to defend these measures in favour of eastern Canada, because federal members are accused of not representing sufficiently precisely that part of the country and of passing all votes in favour of western farmers. I do not agree. Indeed, my eastern friends are wrong in claiming that; when I meet farmers in my area, I stick up for the present federal policy which they consider as clearly unfair to the eastern farmers. They claim that we give all the government's money to the people out West, that we do nothing to help the Easterners. I assure them that what we are now doing is necessary for the Canadian agriculture as a whole, that to the extent where we help the farmers in western Canada, we also help those in eastern Canada.