

Supply

were exported. We can support the present Government if it takes the appropriate action in this area in the future.

Point 11 reads:

We will amend the Advance Payments on Crops Act to double its cash advance levels. The present legislation only doubles these levels for Western grains. We believe all crops, in all areas of Canada, should be equitably treated in a government's agricultural policy.

Again, such a policy will be adequate and worth-while if it is fulfilled. The Government has indicated that it will do so.

● (1550)

Let us judge this Government in a couple of months. There are other promises too that this Government has made or did make before it took power and on which it has not acted. We have had considerable information and suggestions that the Government would deal with the Western Grain Stabilization Act. The Tories said that when going into the election and they said it when they first appeared in the House. Somewhere about the middle of November the Tories indicated it would only be a matter of a few days before amendments to the Western Grain Stabilization Act would be made. We are still waiting for those amendments, and both opposition Parties have indicated they would support such amendments. The Tories have failed to bring them forward.

The present Government also indicated it would do away with the abandonment of rail lines. I must say that, to their credit, the Tories have made that move. But they have indicated very little if any commitment to the action which they themselves have taken. It seems to me window-dressing rather than an actual commitment to replacing into service those lines needed to give the agricultural part of western Canada the kind of transportation service which it needs and which was removed by the previous Government over a matter of about 15 years.

This Government and the previous Government should beware of throwing stones. The Conservatives still have a lot of promises which they have not fulfilled.

Mr. Foster: They never will.

Mr. Hovdebo: The commitments they are making now are ones on which they will be judged in the next few months and years.

As I mentioned before, the three promises made concerning Section 31 on agri-bonds and capital gains do not look too good, according to the report of the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Foster: They are dead ducks.

Mr. Hovdebo: Some of the moves this Government has made have been against the interests of farmers. I can mention one specifically, one that was brought out before the agricultural committee yesterday. The services provided to seed growers have been increased by 400 per cent and 500 per cent by this Government in a recovery program. The inspection of meat and the inspection of plots for registered or certified seed doubled, tripled or quadrupled in cost in comparison with what

it was before. This is at a time when farmers can ill afford to have increased costs. But this Government has been one of the institutions that has increased the costs of farm production and made it a little more difficult for farmers to make ends meet at a time when the farmer needs every opportunity and every method possible to allow production and good, profitable returns.

I think that the Liberals particularly should not throw stones. They had 20 years of opportunity to solve the problems of agriculture. They had 20 years in which their Government ignored the problems. The Liberals did a lot of things about agriculture here, there and all over, some of which benefited the farmers marginally and a lot of which disturbed the farmers and caused some harm. The most glaring example was the elimination of the Crow rate, a guaranteed subsidy to farmers which they needed. This too was done at a time when they could ill afford any extra costs.

We should not be wasting our time on debating which Government is the worst, the past Government or the present Government. It is the sort of situation where we are fiddling while Rome burns. That is exactly the situation in which agriculture is finding itself today. There are thousands of farmers in disastrous situations who are on the verge of leaving the industry. It is time that we in this House, as a Government, as three Parties that have been elected to be responsible for what happens in this country, get together and put in place a global approach, an income security structure which would allow the farmers to produce. If they produce well, they will know that they will be able to meet the high freight rates which the previous Government instituted, inspection costs which this Government has established, and high fuel, chemical and fertilizer costs. If the farmers have the kind of income security structure that would allow them to pay for these things, we would no longer have to worry about band-aids such as stabilization and insurance programs, because the income security program would cover those kinds of possibilities.

One could start out by saying that the Government would be giving a fair price, a price that would include the cost of production for each and every one of the commodities the farmers produce. That obviously would be the most direct and the easiest way to solve the farmers' problems. If that is too difficult, then let us take these two programs, the Western Grain Stabilization Program, the agriculture stabilization program and a variety of other programs which are part of the prop-up system that we are attempting to make available to farmers, and put them all together. Let us approach this on a global basis and say that what is available to the farmer is a certainty and that if he works well, produces well, is efficient and uses the market in the proper way, he will survive and be able to provide a living for himself and his family. He will not go under because of the interest rates, because of the lack of credit or the high cost of machinery; he will produce as he should expect to produce and get enough for it so he can survive. That is the basis on which this House should approach agriculture, not on the basis of small band-aids which may help now but at some time will have to be reviewed and