

*Alleged Failure to Aid Western Farmers*

cents less on the south side of that border than on the north side? It is this agreement, negotiated by this government and its predecessor, under which the Canadian Wheat Board has to operate.

I agree with those who say that the appointment of Mr. Gibbings to the Canadian Wheat Board was a good appointment. However, I do not care who the government appoints to this board, unless it changes the policy it followed during the last few years the grain grower in western Canada is going to be in trouble. Let us get down to the facts as they are and deal with them. We are not looking for charity for the western farmer. We are looking for economic circumstances under which he can operate. If we do not create these economic circumstances all the charity in the world will not help him to remain a farmer. Charity will only destroy the farmer as he is now being destroyed economically.

This situation did not sneak up on us. It was evident a year ago to keen observers on the prairies. They knew what was happening. Surely, it was evident a year ago to those people in government and those who are advising the government. Did they not know? During the last 18 months to two years, since the agreement was signed, we have been trying to fight and come from behind while the Australians, France and the United States have been undercutting us on the market. Our wheat has been piling up on the farms.

I found some figures this afternoon which I should like to give to the house. At Biggar there is in storage 189,000 bushels of wheat with 99,000 bushels of available space. The farmers in the area are on a three bushel quota, of which 50,000 bushels have yet to be delivered. Not one car has gone into the town of Biggar since May 30. The town of Biggar is on the main line of the C.N.R. from Winnipeg to Edmonton. The C.P.R. Rail line, where one elevator exists is one mile away. Biggar has access to the main line of the C.N.R. and a secondary line of the C.P.R., but there has not been one car in since May 30.

During the time we have been talking about this problem the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce has informed us that this aspect of the grain industry is under control. When we have asked for a transport controller the minister has told us this is not necessary, but that is the situation which exists at least at one point, and I suppose it is duplicated at many others.

[Mr. Gleave.]

We must have access to some up to date and up to the minute research as to what is happening in the grain economy of the world. This is not the case now. We should know whether Australia, for example, is introducing new varieties of wheat, or whether Mexico has greater yields. We should know the production of the U.S.S.R. The last time I checked we did not have an agricultural attaché in Moscow. We probably have a military attaché there to find out how many bombs they are manufacturing. Don't we need to know about grain production, or is the information we receive so good that we have no ambition to enlarge upon it?

• (9:00 p.m.)

As late as 1966, and indeed into 1967, we were told we could sell all the wheat we could grow. How could any government be so wrong? The situation would not have been interpreted so wrongly had we listened to independent observers who were saying that sales were declining. They were either hiding their heads in the sand or they were not paying enough attention to find out the facts. I do not know which was the case.

One of the first things we must do is renegotiate the I.G.A. We must go to our partners in this agreement and ask that this be done. These partners are our competitors, but if they are reasonable people they will not let the agreement stand in the way of providing a better deal for this country. We should go to the countries which are partners to the agreement and say that we cannot live with it as it is presently drawn. We should ask whether they are willing to renegotiate the agreement and arrive at a basis upon which we can live with it. Otherwise, we should scrap the agreement. Let us make up our minds about this. The minister should tell the house that he has made up his mind on this question and what the future will be for this country.

Let us not live in the limbo of uncertainty in which we do not know what tomorrow will bring. Let us ascertain what the future holds for the farmers of Rosetown, Biggar and similar areas of Canada. What plans does the government have in mind for assisting these people? They have been getting no direction from the government. They have not been told what steps will be taken to help them with their problems. Why have they not been told? They have not a crystal ball into which they can gaze and see the future; they cannot second-guess.