

*Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act*

This is the people on the farms speaking.

There are millions of bushels of wheat here on the prairies that could be used to meet the needs of all our wheat customers. We trust you are doing everything possible to see that this wheat is being made available to those who want and need it.

We appreciate your work on behalf of the grain farmers of western Canada. You have a big responsibility, not only to them but to those who need this grain for food. We urge you to use every means at your disposal to meet the needs of both.

We hope that this situation at Vancouver will soon be remedied and not permitted to happen again.

I was interested to learn that the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce is going to take a trip west. It is time he did, and while he is there I hope he will talk to people like those who wrote the letter I have just read—responsible people, people who are concerned about this situation. There is an old tradition in Saskatchewan that in times of extreme pressure or disaster the businessmen, the church people and the farmers unite in an attempt to put their situation before those whose responsibility they consider it to be. This is what has happened in this case. This kind of action is not taken lightly. I repeat that this letter was written by people who live in one of the most prosperous areas of Saskatchewan.

The situation there is serious. Unless some effective action is taken the result will be 100-horsepower tractors operating on farms on a subsistence basis. I am shocked when I see figures indicating that our storage capacity on the west coast and at the Lakehead is only half full. Certainly that was the case not more than a week ago. Yet we have ships waiting in Vancouver for grain. I suggest that if we can transport potash across the mountains we can do the same with wheat. Trainloads of potash were crossing the mountains last week, so why can we not move our wheat?

I should like to mention a report made by Mr. Atkinson of the National Farmers Union, who said that the Canadian Wheat Board had instructed grain companies on December 5 to move the equivalent of 15 million bushels of No. 2 wheat to the coast but that only a trickle had arrived at the time he made his report. He went on to say that on the Saturday morning—I do not have the exact date but the date of the release is January 27—there were 53 cars of wheat at the Canadian National Railways yards at Vancouver and a limited number at the C.P.R. yards. He saw

The biggest shortcoming in the government's present approach is that the farmer is being asked to undertake an additional obligation in extremely adverse circumstances. The physical difficulty of drying this grain is enough in itself for the farmer to contend with. Indeed, I have serious doubts that it will be possible to dry all the grain and put it in condition before it starts to spoil next spring. I mentioned the physical difficulty of getting the grain dried. With the weather on the prairies as it is now it is very hard to get equipment moving to do the job. There will only be a very short period during which an all-out effort will have to be made if losses are to be prevented.

This grain is a valuable asset. We know from experience in Canada that though we may at times have surpluses there are other times when we can dispose of those surpluses. I contend there is urgency here. I try to be honest. I try to be objective. But I do not think the degree of the urgency was realized by the government in time. It may be they are realizing it now—I sincerely hope so—but a great deal of effort was required in order to bring the matter effectively before the house.

I wish to read now a letter which was sent to Mr. McNamara, the chief commissioner of the Canadian Wheat Board, a copy of which was sent to me. This letter is from Eston in west central Saskatchewan where I farm—one of the best wheat growing areas in Western Canada. It was written on behalf of the congregation of St. Andrew's United Church in Eston, Saskatchewan and reads as follows:

● (12:40 p.m.)

The congregation of St. Andrew's United, Eston, Saskatchewan instructed us to write to you in relation to the present crisis in wheat shipment to the west coast. We live in an area which is almost totally dependent on grain sales. This past year has been most difficult on both farmers and business dependent on them.

Our concern is twofold, the desire to sell the wheat which is presently stored in elevators and farm granaries, and to provide the hungry with the sustenance of life, bread. It seems a shame that hungry and starving people should be denied bread when we are glutted with grain. The fact that so many ships are waiting in Vancouver harbour to load grain, which hasn't been delivered to the terminals, adds to the concern.

We realize that there are many factors involved, not the least of which has been the shipment and drying of damp and tough grain. However, it seems that with some insight into prospective wheat sales that there should have been dry grain waiting in the terminals for shipment. It would appear to us that someone was negligent in his duty.