

Supply—Trade and Commerce

might add that it appears to be a rather silly mistake.

In concluding my remarks, Mr. Chairman, let me suggest that the government should do a great deal of fancy skating to rectify this situation as soon as possible. The government must not wait until tomorrow to do something. It should adopt that old slogan, do it now. The government should establish a parliamentary committee to study this whole situation and recommend measures to correct it. If it did so, I am sure it would receive the unanimous co-operation of all members. The government should clamp down on those companies which are swindling not only the farmers but the Canadian taxpayers by unnecessarily increasing the cost of machinery of all kinds. This trend is inflationary and is detrimental to the country as a whole. The situation generally discourages the initiative of small, private enterprises, and it creates great problems for politicians in all parties, no matter how thick skinned they may be.

• (5:20 p.m.)

I believe that all parties in opposition will support the government in any measures they take to improve the situation. The producers of farm machinery should be made to close their doors tomorrow morning if they are not able to explain in black and white why we have seen farm machinery costs spiralling. This kind of situation exists in many areas. Perhaps we are to blame in the first place. The same thing applies to the cost of construction. We wonder why the cost of housing has risen. We seem to forget the 11 per cent sales tax and the increase in interest rates. This situation exists with respect to the cost of farm machinery.

If it is our fault, we must take steps to remove some of the blockades that exist. We must exert pressure on the people concerned to reduce the cost of farm machinery so that our farmers will be able to obtain a profit at the end of the year. All the profit should not go into the hands of the farm machinery companies but should be available for the betterment of the farmer and the Canadian people as a whole.

Those, Mr. Chairman, are the two matters I wanted to place before the committee. This is the responsibility of the government. I refer to the spiralling cost of farm machinery. The same thing applies to the cost of producing any commodity in Canada, but at this time we are dealing with the situation confronting our farmers. We must also guarantee to the farmer that he will be able to

[Mr. Langlois (Mégantic).]

sell his products. The government has a responsibility in this regard. I am looking forward to hearing the minister's explanations and his intentions in this regard.

Mr. Olson: Mr. Chairman, I intervene in the debate today, and for the first time from this side of the house, because it is certainly an important and serious matter when there are major fluctuations in the selling price of Canadian wheat. I listened with interest to the hon. member for Bow River. It seemed to me that he had ready a very great speech, if I may use that word, and somehow or other after the minister had completed his statement the steam had disappeared from the speech the hon. member intended to make.

I listened also to the other hon. members who have spoken. The hon. member for Springfield complained that action was not taken in July and August. I listened to the hon. member for Okanagan-Revelstoke. What he said was very interesting, because he was prepared to give me a great deal of credit for having so soon influenced the government in taking the action which the minister announced today.

I appreciate that kind of accolade but am afraid the facts will show that I do not deserve it. The minister made a speech in Winnipeg on Tuesday, September 14, to the Kennedy round trade opportunity seminar. At that time he made it very clear that he and his government intended that the farmers of western Canada could expect the minimums reached under the new agreement in Geneva to be those at which wheat would be sold. I will quote from the minister's speech. He said:

I do not wish to go into detail at this time but I can assure you that every effort is being made to sell maximum quantities of wheat at the best possible prices. Although (the) agreement (is) not yet in effect, I hope wheat will trade within the maximum and minimum. If not, then special consideration will have to be given to what steps can be taken to ensure that the wheat board gets the minimum price.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Olson: It is only two weeks ago that the minister made it very very clear that the government intends to see that the Canadian Wheat Board will obtain at least the minimum price for distribution to farmers, as agreed to in the new wheat agreement. So, while I thank the hon. member for Okanagan-Revelstoke I am afraid that my being on this side of the house began some time after the minister had made his and the government's position clear in so far as this matter