

Mr. T. C. DOUGLAS (Weyburn): Speaking on the budget the other day I endeavoured to outline something of the record of this government with respect to wheat as disclosed by their actions during the last few years. I wish to deal now with their wheat policy as it is revealed in the legislation before the house.

One might very well ask, what is the wheat policy of this government? It is not very easy to determine. On February 16, during this session, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner) announced that the government was going out of the grain trade, that it was going to dispense with the wheat board and abolish the principle of fixed prices for farm products. This was a new and startling announcement, and various reasons were given for it. Papers like the *Toronto Saturday Night* suggested that the Minister of Agriculture was making a bid for support in the east, and others hinted that it was a bid for the support of men like the premier of Ontario, who has been objecting to the amounts spent in western Canada. Whatever the reason may have been, for the six or seven weeks following that announcement a number of kites were flown in western Canada in the form of newspaper articles outlining what the wheat policy would be, though without any definite official pronouncement. Under the storm of protest from western Canada, the policy which had been announced on February 16 was modified and it was intimated that the wheat board would be retained as a temporary measure with a fixed minimum price of 60 cents, and an acreage bonus plan for compensation. Then the Minister of Agriculture went back to Saskatchewan during the Easter recess and spoke to the people there outlining his new wheat policy. I think it is safe to say that the reaction in western Canada has been such as to amount to a social revolt, and under the storm of protest which came from the three prairie provinces the government changed their policy again, raising the fixed price payable by the wheat board to 70 cents and trying to make up for this by cutting down the amount of the acreage bonus, reducing the number of farmers to whom it would be payable. In other words, to save their face the government now proposes to rob Peter in order to pay Paul.

Here is a government which is without a long-term policy but with a number of stop-gaps each designed to gather a measure of support in different parts of the country, without any permanent approach to a solution of the problem facing the agricultural industry of

(Mr. Perley.)

western Canada. As I look at the government's wheat policy I am reminded of a story I heard in the old country during the war. A sailor who came back from overseas brought a chameleon and gave it to his wife. It was a delightful little pet with the marvellous capacity to change its colour to suit its environment.

Mr. GARDINER: That was told long before the war.

An hon. MEMBER: And many times since.

Mr. DOUGLAS (Weyburn): Unfortunately it is still true because there are still some people who are running around like the chameleon and sailing under different colours. The chameleon would turn a shade of pink when his wife wore a pink dress and blue when she wore a blue dress, and when at last she wore a tartan plaid the chameleon killed itself trying to change all the colours at once. That is what has happened with this government's wheat policy. Trying to please everybody the government pleases no one. Since February 16 it has changed its policy from time to time.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Oh, oh.

Mr. DOUGLAS (Weyburn): There are a number of interruptions, Mr. Speaker, but last night when the Minister of Agriculture was speaking and we asked some important questions we were reminded that we were not in committee. I would also remind hon. members that this is the third agricultural bill that has been before the house and the people of western Canada would be much better served if some of these hon. gentlemen would stand up and speak on behalf of their constituents instead of trying to interrupt other members who endeavour to do what they conceive to be their duty.

Mr. McNIVEN: Lecture No. 2.

Mr. DOUGLAS (Weyburn): Now may I turn to the policy of the government as revealed in this legislation. It resolves itself into three parts: first, the government propose to abolish the wheat board as a permanent measure in the handling and marketing of wheat; second, they propose to reduce the guaranteed minimum price; and, third, they propose to introduce an acreage bonus scheme. I wish to deal with these three planks in their wheat policy.

First, with reference to the abolition of the wheat board as a permanent measure, it has been apparent from the beginning that this government have looked upon the wheat