

Alleged Failure to Aid Western Farmers

shipping orders. Farmers are forced to barter grain for machinery and other goods which are not always needed, in order to establish contact and eventually sell grain for some cash. Furthermore the price is rapidly decreasing. Example feed barley now being sold at fifty cents per bushel as compared to seventy seven cents approximately a month ago. Hauling cost no less than twenty cents per bushels for this 300 to 400 mile round trip.

That is from Falher to Dawson City.

When honest people are forced to use illegal means to dispose of their products for their livelihood, it is time for authorities to take action. You have already been informed of our demand for a meeting next week of federal and provincial ministers and other officials. This meeting must take place. Area cash payments may provide temporary relief but will not solve the major problem. Grain cars required must be provided. There is an acute shortage of farm storage facilities for the coming crop. Permission must be sought to fill feed grain requirements in all of Canada. The situation is so critical that physical violence is being contemplated.

It is signed, "R. E. Charbonneau, Falher Chamber of Commerce, President."

The community of Fahler is comprised of many who came to the Peace River area from Quebec. They are good farmers who recognized in early days problems associated with the growing and marketing of wheat. Some of them have gone into seed production, others into honey production and still others cultivate oil seeds. They have done all they can, and in so many words they now say the ball lies in the court of the government. They want to know what the government is going to do about it. I extend this invitation to the minister and to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) to come with me to this meeting when it is held, and there answer the very legitimate and reasonable questions which the farmers of that community feel they must raise with the government.

• (5:10 p.m.)

It is not good enough for the minister to say that the government seeks only long-term solutions. Other governments went beyond that. The government which was under the leadership of the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker), during an equally critical situation, was able to find ways and means of dealing with such a problem. We had a problem with regard to the raising of rapeseed. A number of private members on this side of the house banded together and sought a hearing before the Board of Transport Commissioners. They brought legitimate pressure to bear upon the

[Mr. Baldwin.]

government, upon the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Trade and Commerce. The result was that the government was persuaded to change the Railway Act to permit rapeseed to be classified as a grain. Rapeseed has now reached the stage where it is considered to be a fairly major product in the agricultural industry of western Canada. It is getting increasing attention overseas and in the domestic market.

When I asked the minister what the government was going to do about the debt load that farmers are bearing, in a situation so desperate that action is being taken by machinery companies and other creditors to force farmers to unload and get out of farming, and with action being taken to foreclose mortgages on land, he replied, "Well, we told the Farm Credit Board to look sympathetically on requests for deferment." I challenge that statement. A previous Conservative government back in 1934 was able to find a solution for this problem. I am not suggesting that the government revive the Farmers' Creditors Arrangement Act but I am pointing out that a government with ingenuity, knowledge and determination found a way of grappling with this problem. If the present government had the intestinal fortitude it could do the same thing.

The trouble is that the government does not care. It has washed the people of western Canada out of its mind. It has no real interest in them. There is no question about that at all. This applies particularly to the agricultural community in western Canada. This is a shocking and shameful thing for a government that has been in power for so long to do.

Mr. John Burton (Regina East): Mr. Speaker, nothing could better demonstrate the merit of the suggestion made by my leader, the leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Douglas), and the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) should resign than the speech we have just heard from him. That speech was one of procrastination, indecision and confusion. It was a speech of procrastination because once again the minister adopted an attitude of wait and see. That is exactly what he said last fall. Now, he tries to state that because the farmers somehow managed to deal with a big part of the problem last fall, with a great deal more effort on the part of the individual farmer and the agricultural economy in total than was necessary, there is now no need for action. It was a speech of