

Business of Supply

get by with as little as 20 per cent hard spring wheat. In addition, this soft wheat can easily be secured by Britain in soft currency areas, thus saving the expenditure of hard dollars.

Coupled with that is another change made by our chief export competitors. The United States, Australia, and Russia too, have all switched over to a system of a guaranteed uniform protein basis. This appears to be what today's customers want, and yet Canada persists in selling wheat that varies in protein content from 12 per cent to 15 per cent.

When we consider that Japan is making plans to adopt the new British baking system which requires higher percentages of soft wheat and a guaranteed protein content, we would be blind if we did not see the import for Canadian producers and Canadian export sales. This is one of the chief reasons for my desire to see a thorough and impartial study of our whole system of handling and selling grain, not with any idea of trying to pin blame on anyone or any agency but rather to try to evolve a system that is more adequate, more flexible and more suited to the conditions of the modern market place.

● (5:30 p.m.)

I have no wish to labour my point about the importance of the agricultural industry to Canada. To my mind this is quite evident to any thinking Canadian. But I do wish to emphasize that I believe it is the urgent duty of the government to help an important segment of our national economy which today is in serious trouble. A large number of our people are directly or indirectly dependent upon the industry of agriculture both for export and domestic use, and the high levels of taxes paid by this industry are vital in maintaining such things as our extensive social and welfare services, not to mention many hundreds of small municipalities.

As an example of the situation of farmers in my own province of Manitoba, in 1969 the actual cash income, from all sources, of farmers was about \$250 million. The value of production was about \$450 million, according to the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. This means that about \$200 million worth of grain is still in the storage bins. If this grain is not moved and turned into cash, disaster will ensue and not only will the farmers of Manitoba suffer but many thousands of Canadians from the prairies to the Atlantic coast.

I urge this government to regard the situation in agriculture as one of national crisis and to take immediate, effective action to modernize the whole system of buying, transporting, storing and marketing our grain crop whether it be wheat, barley, oats, flax or rapeseed. We have the skills, the know-how and the adaptability; all we need is action and leadership at the national level.

Mr. D. R. Gundlock (Lethbridge): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure this afternoon to take part in the discussion on what the minister in charge of the Wheat Board described as a phony issue. When I look across the House I am reminded of the many times that we, the opposition in this chamber, have been accused of being a great nuisance and worth nothing. We have been told that the other side of the House received the mandate of the people and therefore we might just as well save our breath. Mr. Speaker, I wish people who gave that mandate were in the galleries today to see the empty seats on the other side of the House.

An hon. Member: Count your own.

Mr. Gundlock: This is no phony issue. The minister invited us to talk to the farmers, to listen to what they said and to tell them what a good, efficient job he is doing. Well, Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask him—

Mr. Lang: You missed the point.

Mr. Gundlock: —why he does not even listen to the farmers who sit with him at the Privy Council table. Does he not receive advice on the shipping and handling of grain from any of his colleagues? Does he ignore the fact that there are dozens of people directly concerned with this problem—and I mean directly? In 1932 I worked on a farm. In 1936 I managed a large farm, and in 1939 I had my own farm.

I think it is about time the minister responsible took some of the advice he gives. What better place is there for a farmer to speak than in this chamber? I know a farmer cannot speak personally, but as an MP he can speak, in spite of what the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) has said about an MP not amounting to a hill of beans. I take exception to that remark, although as a matter of fact I think he has said worse. I have heard that the Prime Minister has 30 advisers.

Mr. Baldwin: He should have more.

Mr. Gundlock: Perhaps he should have another name for them—trusties. They are