

Speech from the Throne

al. Agriculture has been in the unfortunate position of being unable to price its products. In many cases, the general cost of services has been a prime difficulty in the past few years. Although the price of agricultural produce has not risen, the cost of services on the farming scene has risen very greatly.

During the debates we have had on agriculture and on bills presented to the House during the last session—I have in mind in particular the stabilization bill which died on the order paper—no indication was given that the price of the farmers' products would rise. There was talk about stabilizing incomes, but the stabilization of income during an inflationary cycle can be of very little use. To adopt the expression so often used by the member for Mackenzie (Mr. Korchinski), all you are doing is stabilizing poverty.

We have gone nearly four years as a parliament so that we know an election is not far away. In view of this, I think it is useful to see just what may lie ahead of us and to note the attitude of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) on legislation he may bring forward for the agriculture industry.

I should just like to quote a statement from the *Western Producer* concerning a speech the Prime Minister made not too long ago. It reads as follows:

Agriculture would not be able to meet the challenge of the future if it did not become economically independent, he added.

"Like any other industrial sector, it has to operate and will have to operate without subsidies, without outside aid, as a mature organism that has developed its full potential."

It was becoming less and less acceptable that consumers bear the cost of farmers' deficiencies, he said.

When the Prime Minister speaks in those terms it seems he regards the agriculture industry as a vast, subsidized segment of our society, as though agriculture were the only recipient of the largesse of government. May I draw to the attention of hon. members the passage of the textiles bill which afforded certain protection to that industry. Then, there was the write-off of \$70 million back taxes owed by the Ford Motor Company, as well as the \$6 million given to Proctor and Gamble to establish an industry which was already in over-production across the country. The government subsidizes one plant here and closes down a similar plant in another part of Canada.

This kind of action costs taxpayers' dollars. The agriculture industry receives only a very small percentage of the money the government spends on subsidies and to say otherwise is to create a false impression. It misleads the taxpayers and voters, and the use of this tactic is a continual disappointment to us. It is this sort of thing that has led to the west sometimes feeling it has only a colonial status vis-à-vis the east. Certainly, the western provinces have definite cause for some concern in this respect.

For the future, I think we need to examine programs that parallel to a certain extent United States programs to assist marketing of grain. Under these programs a floor price is put on grain, particularly feed grains, and the producer is given the option whether to sell to the government at the floor price or to put his product on the open market. Certainly, I think some drastic changes need to be made in the present marketing system, particularly in regard to the domestic feed grain marketing arrangements in Canada today.

Grain handling is a problem that is ever with us and is of particular concern to the western provinces. In answer to a question I asked during the question period yesterday, the minister in charge of the Wheat Board indicated, when I questioned him about difficulties that were arising in the port of Vancouver, that things were going well. However, this is not the impression received by neutral observers. I am not talking about political observers but neutral observers at this port facility. Now, nobody blames the minister for the fact that it snowed and the railway lines were blocked. The fact that strikes intervened on many occasions was not his fault and nobody blames him for that. The major cause of concern is the fact that he is not willing to admit having tried a no-storage policy at our terminal port positions and that it is not working. We must have the assurance that when strikes occur at these port facilities or when the weather is bad, as it always is during some part of the Canadian winter, this grain will move.

• (1430)

I should like to read a few excerpts from a report issued by the Palliser Wheat Growers Association. Last week a group of members went to investigate the tie-up at the Vancouver port facility and here is an excerpt from their report:

With nearly 20 ships sitting idle in Vancouver Harbor, the Palliser members were told by an export company official that the estimated present backlog of 20 million bushels of wheat will not be caught up with until July.

The National Harbors Board gave the farmers a tour of the waterfront where the Palliser members saw idle ships and nearly idle grain terminals.

The lone ship at the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool terminal was fittingly named the *Heroic*. It has been in the port a full month, trying to scrape together a full load of grain from the half dozen grain terminals.

About 1.8 million bushels of exportable wheat is now in terminals (as of Friday) compared to the almost 20 million needed to fill waiting ships.

Meanwhile, the farmers were told by the export official that Canada is not making new sales, because it is going to be too busy trying to catch up on the old sales.

Yesterday in the House the minister in charge of the Wheat Board told us at great length how well sales were going, that everything was moving normally and how many boxcars reached port in the last two days. But the Palliser Wheat Growers Association is a neutral observer with no political axe to grind. Perhaps I could be accused of that or even the members to my left, but certainly the Palliser Wheat Growers Association could not be accused of having a biased opinion of what is going on at the port facility. Referring to comments of Palliser president Walter Nelson, the report continues:

He said discussions with a representative of the exporting firm, Cargill of Canada Ltd., supporting Palliser's contention that the Canadian Wheat Board grain transportation policies are wrong.

And later:

The Cargill official confirmed Palliser's claim that idle ships are having a harmful, two-fold effect on Canada's grain industry—first, shipping companies protect themselves from long delays by charging higher freight rates, and second the port, with a poor reputation in the matter already, is getting a blacker international name and may force Canada to sell wheat even cheaper than the present low prices to attract buyers and shippers.