

government that has taken the kind of action we are debating this evening. Either he condoned or approved this action, or he did not have the guts to stand up and resign.

Another crucial part of this debate concerns farm income. The minister acknowledged in his remarks that we are facing a serious situation. But if we look at farm net income in the province of Saskatchewan, for example, the decline that has taken place in the last three years is catastrophic. In 1968, farm net income in Saskatchewan was \$462 million, in 1969, that dropped to \$402 million and in 1970 it dropped by more than 50 per cent to just under \$195 million. That, I think, indicates how serious the situation is. I think it also indicates the very urgent need for a better government response and a more adequate response to the income needs of farmers in western Canada.

• (10:30 p.m.)

The Canadian Federation of Agriculture, in its presentation to the government and to the House of Commons committee on the subject of Bill C-244, pointed out that their studies show that the grain industry in western Canada is operating at a net loss right now. The only net income coming to agriculture in the prairie regions is from livestock—thank God, cattle prices have held up reasonably well—and from income in kind, the stuff you grow and use yourself. This indicates the extent of the problem that exists. My colleague, the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar pointed out how prices have declined in recent months and years, in spite of the movement of grain indicated by the minister in charge of the Wheat Board. The minister pointed out the record movement of grain in western Canada.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel):** Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but the time allotted to him has expired, unless he receives the unanimous consent of the House to continue. Is there such unanimous consent?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Burton:** Thank you. I assure you I will bring my remarks to a rapid conclusion. The minister has been citing this record movement of grain. If he adds together wheat, oats, barley, rye, flax and rapeseed, he can come up with a record figure, but it is rather like the old adage about adding together apples, oranges and tomatoes because it does not reflect the true situation. Also, it does not reflect the fact that we are presently selling our grain at reduced prices, at lower prices than was the case a few years ago. There is a need for action now.

Bill C-244 is simply not good enough; it does not meet the needs. We have suggested to the minister on many occasions that if the government will pay out the \$100 million by separating that provision from the rest of the bill, we on the opposition side will give it immediate passage. If he says he wants to get it into the hands of the western farmers, we are prepared to do this at any time. I think this fact was made clear. He has come up with other fanciful tales suggesting how the bill has been

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delayed. This is simply not in accordance with the facts. We do need an ever normal granary policy. We have to recognize the need for some overhaul of the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act, but Bill C-244 does nothing; it simply eliminated the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act. There are reasons for providing for an ever normal granary policy. There are reasons for a greater infusion of money into the western grain industry. The government can find money for just about any other sector of the economy that finds itself with problems, but they are going to set up limits on the assistance available to prairie grain producers.

In conclusion, I think the crux of the debate tonight is that farmers want the money from the temporary wheat reserves, and they want it now. Farmers need that money, and they need it now. I think also that we have to keep in mind that there is a concern with Canada's future. We are concerned with regional disparities, and among those disparities we are concerned with a host of problems in western Canada. These cannot be ignored; they are part of the over-all Canadian problem and flouting the law does not help build Canada's future. The people of Canada want the law of the land observed as it should be, and promptly. Certainly, they will deal harshly with any government which ignores the laws that have been placed on the statute books.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marcel Lessard (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture):** Mr. Speaker, in participating in tonight's debate on the opposition motion of censure concerning the agricultural policies of the government, I cannot refrain from thinking how greatly our farmers can be harmed by the partisan battles waged within these walls.

Today again, we are given a striking instance of the insincerity of some opposition members, much more concerned with petty politics than with the true interest of the farmers they claim to represent in this House.

My remarks will be brief as the minister in charge of the Wheat Board (Mr. Lang) has accurately and clearly described the situation and I feel it would be superfluous to add lengthy comments to what he said.

But since this government has been in office, I have with several colleagues taken part in almost all the meetings of the Standing Committee on Agriculture. Except on very few occasions, it has been a continuing battle at the expense of farmers by some members of the opposition, among whom the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner).

Tonight, the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams) blames the government for doing nothing to help the western farmer. Far from me, Mr. Speaker, the idea of underestimating the problems that have experienced and continue to experience the Canadian farmers, and particularly the grain producers of western Canada, because that would evidence utter ignorance not to say real dishonesty, to claim that the situation is caused through the action or lack of action of the government. I believe that any sensible person will admit that the