

services and for that investment. The hon. member for Last Mountain was particularly condemnatory of these charges when he spoke in the house last July, and both the hon. member for Souris and the hon. member for Portage la Prairie have complained that the elevator companies are receiving too high a return in comparison with what the farmer is asked to take. Surely, if the elevator companies are entitled to a tremendous return on their investment, the man who makes the wealth which they are storing is entitled to at least a reasonable return on his labour.

With respect to this question of storage charges generally I want to add my protest to that which has been already voiced in this house against the exceptional consideration that has been given to elevator companies under the order in council dated February 19, which is referred to in *Hansard* of March 12 of this year by the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. MacKinnon) in the following words:

To meet this situation the government entered into an arrangement with western elevator companies for the construction of approximately 50 million bushels of temporary terminal storage space at Fort William-Port Arthur. The arrangements made were approved by order in council of February 19, 1941. I am assured a large part of this new space will be ready by July 31 of this year and the remainder in August and September. These facilities are being constructed by the elevator companies. The government has agreed to maintain all elevator tariff charges now prevailing without reduction until July 31, 1943, and to allow the companies to write off as depreciation for income tax purposes 50 per cent of the actual cost of construction in each of two successive years.

With the elevators full, with the storage charges guaranteed until 1943, with the right to write off this additional construction in the space of two years, I suggest that the elevator companies are indeed sitting in a very comfortable position and I only wish that the farmers were in a position in any way comparable. I am sure that many members of this house were astounded by the figures given the other day by the hon. member for Qu'Appelle (Mr. Perley) when he showed the sort of profit the elevator companies were making, and specifically pointed out that this additional storage space, which would take care of 50,000,000 bushels of wheat, would cost approximately \$5,000,000 and that in one year the elevator companies would get \$4,000,000 from it and in less than a year and a half would have paid for the entire additional elevator space. Added to that they will have the right to write off the whole thing for income tax purposes in the course of two years.

[Mr. Bence.]

If the government of the country can be so generous to the elevator companies, it can be at least reasonable to the farmers. Industrial workers, I suggest, are being fairly treated and rightly so; but there is no reason why the farmer, who works just as hard and as diligently and who is producing a commodity that is required, should not be treated as well.

Mr. WOOD: Is it not true—I asked the hon. member for Souris the same question the other day but did not get a satisfactory answer—that the handling companies are largely companies whose stock is held by the farmers? I want to be correct on that. I understand that there is a provincial obligation, but is not the common stock held by the farmers, so that a lot of the money goes back to the same people who grow the grain?

Mr. BENCE: I was wondering whether the hon. member who asked the question of the hon. member for Souris and also of the hon. member for Portage la Prairie, suggesting that it was pertinent to the debate, had taken the opportunity to look into the matter for himself over the week-end, in order to determine whether it was so or not. He seemed to be so much interested in the debate, and he said it was so pertinent, I wondered if he had obtained information on the subject.

Mr. WOOD: The hon. member claims to be an authority.

Mr. BENCE: I do not claim to be an authority but I have obtained a book which I have been looking into during the week-end and I was wondering whether the hon. member also had obtained the information. This is an exhaustive book of 227 pages. It contains a list of the grain elevators in the western and eastern divisions. It was impossible for me to calculate the exact amount of elevator space owned by the United Grain Growers as opposed to the amount held by private interests, but contrary to what the hon. member stated the other day, the majority of the space is not owned by the wheat pool and the grain growers. I cannot tell him exactly. It was indicated to me that it would take three or four days to figure it out. I can tell him however that according to the Canada Year Book of 1941 there are 5,672 country elevators, and of that number 2,096 are owned by the United Grain Growers and the pool elevators of the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, considerably less than half. I was not able to calculate exactly what the proportion would be in connection with the terminal elevators, but I do say that well over half are owned by private concerns. Furthermore, those owned by the United Grain Growers and by the pool return dividends to the owners and not