

Government Wheat Policy

There is no need to endeavour to exaggerate the situation. We in western Canada face a most serious condition of affairs, yet the government supinely refuses any consideration or any action. I know, Mr. Speaker, we have to go a long way to regard anything on the part of this government as an emergency, but this is an emergency that worsens every day.

One cannot go into the facts, as Your Honour has said. We can simply point out how serious things are, how we have warned them day after day, and all we have received in return is the glossed over observations of the Minister of Agriculture who, even today, is abroad telling them in Europe how to run the O.E.C.D. With all the force at my command I repeat that there never was before this house in the last eight, nine or ten years anything more emergent than this, yet the government sits silent. Even the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Macdonald), the farmer from Bay Street, has not spoken yet. I await his words. He is the only one, I believe who has his heart sufficiently softened to ask the house that this motion be accepted.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I ask the cooperation and indulgence of hon. members, and I trust there will not be too many further contributions to the debate which we are effectively having at this time.

• (3:20 p.m.)

Perhaps I should invite hon. members to be as brief as possible in their statements.

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, may I address myself to the urgency of this matter, and repeat that I am one of a number of members of this house who have exhausted every possible opportunity available since the beginning of this session on September 12 to obtain a statement of government policies and programs to deal with this situation. We have tried in every way possible, during questions on the orders of the day, during the throne speech and budget debates, yet we have not received any indication from the government as to what action it intends to take. We have exhausted every effort, sir.

I spent the last two week ends in my constituency, and the people I represent believe this to be a matter of urgency. I am sure every member who represents a constituency like mine has found the same thing. This is a matter of national importance which involves

hundreds of millions of dollars and a great many more people than farmers. It involves the transportation industry, the grain handling industry and the entire economy of this country. It also affects our export markets. All these matters are of extreme importance to every member of this house. We have tried everything we can to get this government to deal with this situation and I plead with you now, sir, to rule this motion in order because of this urgency, so this house will have the opportunity to obtain some indication from this government about its programs to deal with this matter.

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, the only question to be dealt with at this time is the question of urgency of debate. If I may I should like to direct Your Honour's attention to citation 100(3) of Beauchesne's fourth edition, which states:

"Urgency" within this rule does not apply to the matter itself, but it means "urgency of debate", when the ordinary opportunities provided by the rules of the house do not permit the subject to be brought on early enough and public interest demands that discussion take place immediately.

Mr. Speaker, an hon. member says we are two months late now. That is a very useful observation. We have followed a practice in this house in dealing with the estimates of various departments. I have arranged to introduce here such estimates as hon. members wished to have dealt with, and have, by agreement with the opposition house leaders, referred those estimates to the standing committees which hon. members in the opposition did not wish to deal with in the house. Therefore, if the hon. member who just sat down has exhausted every effort to have this matter dealt with in order to get action, let me suggest that he should have had his house leader, or one of the other house leaders, request that the estimates of the Department of Agriculture be considered here.

We have been considering estimates now for several weeks, and there still are several more days for their consideration, but there has been no request from hon. members opposite that the estimates of the Department of Agriculture be brought before this house at a time when the Minister of Agriculture was here. Just by coincidence this motion is proposed today when my colleague the Minister of Agriculture is attending the O.E.C.D. in Paris. I think it is important that a Canadian representative should be at an international meeting on farm policy.