

Government Orders

Well, while this government was in the process of amending the Crop Insurance Act, with the intent of reducing its financial commitment to that act, it has launched an attack on the Wheat Board at the same time; first, with the removal of oats from the export jurisdiction of the board, and now with this full-scale review of the board itself.

Do not blame me for being sceptical or afraid that once again the Conservative philosophy of getting out of government will lead to the destruction of the Canadian Wheat Board and the destruction of farms across the country. Central desk selling and the pooling of grain prices is still the preference of the majority of farmers across Canada. The Canadian Wheat Board has proven its value. Last year in particular, despite advances made by the Americans and the Europeans on the world market, the Wheat Board beat the odds and sold more grain than it was expected to sell under those circumstances.

Do not forget, Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Wheat Board was established because Canadian farmers had absolutely no say in the market-place. That seems to me to be the direction to which this government wants to return.

• (1800)

At a time when Canadian farmers need the support of their government and the benefits that can be achieved by co-operation and pooling resources, this government is working to return the industry to the hands of the grain trade whose only interest is the profits they can make, not the income that the farmer can make.

Farmers and Canadians have to ask themselves: should farmers go back to the winner-loser type of market situation where every grain grower is competing for market share and price with every other grain grower in the country?

Saskatchewan Wheat Pool delegates recently showed their preference by voting to support the orderly marketing of grain through the Wheat Board. The government opposite must take heed or risk putting farmer against farmer, community against community, and slowly destroy the entire basis on which the farm economy is structured.

Bill C-48 is just one more step in this long, complicated and dangerous process that is removing the federal government from its commitment to the future and to Canadian farmers.

You will remember, Mr. Speaker, that I rose in my place last week to ask the government to provide immediately for the industry's call for \$500 million so that producers could get their crops in the ground. The snow is melting on the prairies, the farmers are in their garages and their Quonsets preparing their equipment for the land, but the financial institutions are refusing to lend the money they need to get the seed in the ground.

We have never seen a crisis like what we are seeing right now on the prairies. The government takes great pleasure in talking about all it has done for agriculture. I have heard it said that the proof is in the pudding.

If what the government has done in the past is so wonderful, why is the industry in such trouble today? The government's band-aids have been necessary but they are wearing awfully thin. If the crisis in agriculture is a wound, it needs a cleansing remedy, it needs a tourniquet, it needs to be healed so that a healthy industry can grow.

Nothing done to date has been anything more than a band-aid. The assistance in recent years has been greater than at any other time in our history. That does not mean it has been adequate or that the programs which brought it forward were adequate. The agriculture crisis has been building for nine years. It is the result of Liberal and Conservative government mismanagement and totally inappropriate responses to the circumstances in the world market-place.

The amendments to the Crop Insurance Act, the removal of oats from the Wheat Board, the termination of the branch line rehabilitation program, the cancelling of the interest-free cash advance, all make it more difficult for the farmer to respond individually to changes in that international market-place.

Although the Uruguay Round at GATT will end this year, the international problem with export subsidies is still there. There will be no magic solutions for the crop year ahead of us. The government cannot continue to sit on its hands and hope that the market-place will solve the problem for it.