

Business of Supply

be gained by trying now to move more than is being moved.

To get back to the original argument, grain is moving at the rate of about 20 million bushels a month. Everybody in Canada is benefiting from this movement, except the farmer. It does not matter where we live—Halifax, Montreal, Toronto or Winnipeg—the movement of grain through the country is creating jobs for people, for oil workers in Alberta, for the railway men, for grain brokers, for vessel brokers, for insurance men—for everybody who is in any way connected with the trade however remotely. Everyone, that is except the farmer.

Farmers who survive this short-term crisis will ultimately benefit, too. At the moment, what is keeping the wolf from the door is \$252,700,000 worth of advances, which is good. It cannot be ignored. True, these are only loans, though no interest needs to be paid on them. The people of Canada, who are benefiting from all this movement of grain, are taking up the slack, helping the people of western Canada, by paying interest charges on these loans of \$252 million, as well as by paying some storage fees. That is just about all.

To get back to the story of confederation, I have no doubt that the long-term solutions which are being worked out by this government and by private individuals of great competence will ultimately see western Canada through this crisis. However, I suggest that the people of Canada as a whole, and we as parliamentarians who represent them, are not being very good Canadians or acting as deeply committed partners in confederation, nor are we acting as very intelligent people, if we do not keep pressure on this government to come up with ways and means of helping these farmers get through their short-term crisis in a manner which will not delude them into growing a heck of a lot more grain, but in a way which will assist them to get through this period of changeover, by diversifying their operation or contracting it to a point at which only the amount of grain presently needed will actually be produced.

This is a challenge to Canada which will not be met by putting forward motions which inadvertently seem to be futile, like the one we are discussing this evening, or motions like the one to abolish the Senate which everyone knows is an illegal proposition, brought into the House to waste its time.

[Mr. Osler.]

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Who said so?

Mr. Osler: Instead, what we must do is find ways and means of helping these people through a short-term—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Order. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but his time has expired.

Mr. Craig Stewart (Marquette): Mr. Speaker, I do not believe there could be a more opportune occasion for a debate on agriculture, or more urgent need for such a debate. As we all know, this is the first day since the resumption of the session on which the official opposition has been able to designate the subject of the discussion to take place in the House. I thank my colleagues on this side for agreeing to have this debate on agriculture. It is obvious that the government does not want to discuss our farm problems.

• (9:20 p.m.)

The federal constituency of Marquette is mainly a rural riding. During the Christmas recess I had the opportunity of touring my riding and talking to many farmers and businessmen. I have never seen the western economy in the deplorable condition it is in today. The lack of grain sales and the existence of the largest wheat glut in our history is affecting everybody in western Canada. Many businesses will be lucky to survive this year, and most farmers are desperate for cash.

According to figures released by the Canadian Wheat Board, as of January 5 in Manitoba there were 271 delivery points on initial quota and 51 delivery points on a one-bushel quota. For the benefit of hon. members in this House who do not understand what an initial unit quota means, it means that all the income these farmers have received since July 31, 1969, from grain is approximately \$500. How would anybody like to survive for six months on \$500?

Mr. Bell: That's even worse than \$30 a week.

Mr. Stewart (Marquette): The government might say that the farmer can get cash advances up to \$6,000 in any one crop year. This sounds good, but an individual has to be a mighty large farmer to qualify for the full amount of \$6,000. The average farmer in my area, and I stress the word "average", is lucky