

associations and private business. In association with this, export credit and export insurance must be made more readily available to other countries. I say this to reinforce my point that all our deliberations are to no avail unless these steps are also adopted.

We must try also to place greater emphasis on continuity of the supply for export markets. If a contract is signed with a foreign country, we must be able to guarantee delivery of the product on the date and in the amounts specified. To do this requires the revamping of existing facilities at our ports. If we are to compete in the export markets, continuity of supply is vital. Market research must also be greatly expanded. The research that is needed, should be designed to reveal the size of the markets, the quality of the products demanded, how the markets are changing, and market strategies for Canadians.

I firmly believe the primary and continuing role of any government should be to produce a desirable economic and social climate for people in agribusiness. I say this in talking on the amendments to the Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act because I have grave doubts whether this is the direction in which we are moving. It is my opinion that as we move into the seventies this must be our primary goal and objective. This role should not include managing agriculture any more than it is the role of government to manage the steel industry or the pulp and paper industry. Because agriculture is peculiar in many respects, social as well as economic aspects of all policies must be kept in mind. Governments must always be aware that they are dealing with human beings and not abstract problems.

To sum up, Mr. Speaker, I would say that the amendments proposed in this legislation do lend a greater degree of flexibility to the act, but they will work only if they are coupled with a much more aggressive marketing approach.

Mr. Rod Thomson (Battleford-Kindersley): Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House have experienced some frustration lately because there have been no agricultural bills before us to give us an excuse to scold the minister. We do not want the minister to think he is doing a good job, or anything like that, because obviously this is not the case. Many farmers tell me that things are not good and that it is time the government did something.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The farmers are always right.

Mr. Thomson: It seems to me that Liberal politicians do not always listen to what farmers have to say. I do not know whether this is because they are not farmers themselves or because they have never suffered hurt. Those who have suffered hurt or put up with a little hardship have a better understanding or what it is to go hungry.

● (9:00 p.m.)

Cash advances have helped farmers solve some of their problems. In addition, they have helped the economy of western Canada as much as they have helped the farm-

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ers, because farmers have no money over by the time they have paid their bills. Most rural municipalities have a good collection record as far as repayment of cash advances is concerned. To give credit where credit is due, this program has served a useful purpose in keeping municipalities, school units and the like viable.

Cash advances were first introduced because there was a need. I suggest that if our economy had been kept in gear and we had maintained our wheat sales as we should, and some of the changes required in the farming scene had been made a little sooner with proper leadership from the government, there would not have been so great a problem as later developed. The real reason for introducing cash advances was that we were not selling sufficient grain.

Now we have the situation where farmers who took the full advance last year are delivering grain, and with the low price of wheat and other grains at the moment they find they have very little money to last them the winter, and this leaves them a little disgusted. I have checked into the situation to see how things are in my part of the country, and businessmen tell me that although things are better and there is a more optimistic mood on the part of farmers and businessmen, actually there is no great flow of money.

The prime reason for this lack of money is that much of what the farmers receive from their grain sales goes to re-pay their cash advances. In addition, expenses are at a high level. The hon. member for Lisgar (Mr. Murta) suggested that we needed a more positive sales approach, and I agree. But in addition to a more positive sales approach we need some understanding of the cost factors in this country. It is not enough just to sell grain. You have to sell grain at a reasonable price. Not only that, but we need to control prices of goods so that incomes are kept steady. If we cannot do this, we will have to look around for additional sources of income.

There will be a number of agricultural bills before the House in the next few weeks and I shall have many more comments to make about the position of our farmers. I have no desire to make them all at the moment. I favour the changes proposed in this bill; for the most part I think they are helpful and needed and will make the legislation more effective.

I want to make one further comment about elevator agents who have frequently been asked to make cash advances. For the most part they are good, solid citizens who know their people. The record of collection of cash advances has been relatively good in the past, and we hope it will continue to be so. If it is not, I suspect it will be because the problems in this country have become so acute that the farmers have no alternative but to renege on some of their economic commitments and find themselves looking for some way of evading obligations that have become too onerous for them to meet. Having said that, I close by saying I favour the cash advance amendments and I wish the minister well in their administration.

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise only to add a few remarks that I was hoping the