

Grain

I should like to invite the Minister of Trade and Commerce to come to Yorkton-Melville or any other western constituency, spend only one day there, and talk to the farming people. Regardless of the statistics he quotes I am sure he will then know that something is badly lacking in the farming industry today. It is no joke. I am very dismayed when I hear people opposite laugh at the situation in which the farmers find themselves today. I believe that the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), when speaking in Winnipeg, summed up the attitude of the government toward the farming industry when he suggested it is basically the farmers' responsibility to sell the wheat. This is the kind of attitude we see across the way today. It is essentially the philosophy of Liberalism or limited government. They do not want to become involved; they want to lock up the problem in a closet and throw away the key. It is just like Biafra; they lock up the problem there and say that it does not exist.

There is no co-ordination or planning. They speak, for example, about establishing a national grains council. What will this do? It will probably provide another bureaucratic institution with more red tape, protocol and confusion. Then we start asking why people are really becoming fed up with things and why the country is becoming restless. We ask why there are demonstrations and riots in our society. I think the answer is apparent. People want action from governments at all levels. Some day the farmer will become fed up with what is happening to him. He is tired of being continually slapped in the face. Maybe the next time the Prime Minister comes to Saskatchewan he will not only be met by demonstrating students but also by farmers unless something is done immediately in an effort to alleviate the problem of the farmers of Saskatchewan and the west.

I think all of us in this house know that many farmers are sliding into poverty. Things are rough. If they have grain, they cannot sell it or it is tough, damp or of inferior quality. It seems ludicrous that while we talk about wheat sales and lack of markets two-thirds of the world population is living at a level of deprivation. It does not seem right when we have so much grain. I have heard many members of the government insinuate that the farmers are lazy and complacent about drying their own grain. Why do they say this? I think the members of the government should look at themselves. They have shown a lack of leadership. The people on the farms

[Mr. Nystrom.]

do not have the cash to dry all the grain they want to dry or if they do some of them do not wish to run the risk because of the poor operations that are going on.

This evening many members have quoted statistics. They have spoken about many things. All I want to say is that we should get down to doing some good, basic planning because the farmers of western Canada and all the people in the smaller communities in the country as well will suffer if we do not. We must do something constructive. It has been suggested that we appoint a controller who would go to Vancouver to help supervise the loading of ships and clear up the bottleneck. This is one thing we could do. There should be more co-ordination between the Wheat Board, the transportation system, the National Harbours Board and the government in trying to alleviate the problem. In the long term we must really support the agricultural industry of this country. We must look for any new alternatives that people can explore.

This crisis is just one of a number we see in the farming industry in Canada today. On behalf of the people of my constituency I plead that the government do something immediately to alleviate the crisis which faces us today in western Canada.

• (12:20 a.m.)

Mr. Paul Yewchuk (Athabasca): I am going to try to be as impartial as I can.

An hon. Member: I thought you were going to say brief.

Mr. Yewchuk: I shall be brief in my remarks as well. I should like to begin by stating that the Liberal government, since it has been in power, has been known as a government having no real concern for western agriculture. What is happening here tonight is typical of the way this government deals with problems, particularly agricultural problems. This government waits for a crisis to occur and then scurries around in an attempt to come up with some emergency solution. There does not seem to be any thought of looking ahead or trying to foresee an emergency, and doing something about it.

In spite of repeated warnings in the past two months or so that a crisis situation was developing in respect of wheat sales, the movement and drying of wheat, no effective government action has been taken. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) and the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) gave us repeated assurances that