

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

bill in such a way that farmers could have \$100 million in cash, because the money is needed immediately. Many other things are needed right now to salvage the family farm in western Canada. Action cannot be put off indefinitely because the longer it is delayed, the fewer farmers will be remaining on the land. In Saskatchewan last year more than 30,000 left the province, most of them as a direct result of the slump in the agriculture industry.

• (10:10 p.m.)

We need to take many steps if we are to save the family farm. We need a two-price system for grain, for example, which will give the farmer a certain price for wheat that is sold domestically and another price for wheat sold internationally. We must do something about the high cost of farm machinery, about implementing many of the recommendations made by the Barber commission on the high cost of farm machinery. Most of all, as a Parliament we must try to convince the government that they must listen to farmers and farm organizations. This they have not done in the past. It is about time democracy was made more meaningful and the government listened to the farmers, instead of having an election every four years and forgetting about them in the interval.

The National Farmers Union, the Federation of Agriculture, the wheat pools and other organizations are unanimous with regard to many recommendations that have been made to the government. One thing they all call for is emergency action, and this call has been made for the last year or two. Let us not put this action off any longer. They need the \$100 million and they need it now, so why does the government not listen to them?

The farm unions also want us to debate the stabilization plan because many of the provisions contained therein are not what the farmers want. Why does the government not listen to the farmers for a change, instead of dictating to them? These are some of the steps we shall have to take to stimulate and encourage a way of life that is a very meaningful one, the rural way of life. But instead of this we have hassles about the government withholding payments under the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act which should be made to the Wheat Board for storage. These payments should be made. The farmers should be helped, not hindered.

I anticipate that the parliamentary secretary will stand up and talk about the stabilization bill and say that we are holding it up. I would remind the House once again that we have moved to separate this bill. All members on this side of the House want the bill separated so that the \$100 million can be paid out. When the parliamentary secretary rises, I hope he will have something constructive to say. If not, then I am afraid that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) will be afraid to participate in the Assiniboia by-election that will be held on November

8, because at that time the farmers will have a chance to pass judgment on the government's agricultural policies.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Lessard (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, in answer to the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom), I would first like to pick up one of his remarks to the effect that I would probably blame the opposition for the bad situation because they are the ones who prevented Bill C-244 from being passed. Well, I am afraid I will disappoint him a little for I had no intention whatsoever to deal with the legislative steps.

The hon. member pointed out, very eloquently I must admit, the difficult situation of agriculture in the Prairies, and particularly in his own province of Saskatchewan which was more affected than the two others by losses in grain sales over the last three years.

I should like to point out that he is asking the Prime Minister to make a statement on a new policy the government could propose with a view to solving the problem. It must be recognized that the government has made numerous efforts to that effect in the last few years and that, if the problem has not been solved to the satisfaction of the hon. member and western farmers, it certainly is not that the government has remained idle. After all, it must be agreed that we are dependent of international factors which are beyond our control for all practical purposes and the government must act under such circumstances.

Now last year was excellent, since our sales reached a record figure. Indeed, according to the data obtained up to now, we have sold this year over 600 million bushels of various kinds of grain. We recognize that even if this is a record in the history of grain sales in Canada—those are only exports—the prices were not as high as expected and the amount paid will probably be equivalent to that of the best previous year. But to that, one must add the sales made in Canada, and the prices paid last year were necessarily higher than those of the previous year. The serious problem is that the farmers, having gone into debt during the two preceding years, having even received advances for the crops they reaped and stored, and obviously having paid part of this debt, surely do not have the cash they would like to have.

However, some legislation is now being prepared. The hon. member mentioned an act on price stabilization. Certain other legislative proposals are being drafted and I feel that, within a few months, the economic situation of the western provinces will have improved. It will come back to the level it had reached some three years ago, when there had not yet been any reduction in prices.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10:17 p.m.