

Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act

around \$6 Canadian a bushel for wheat. He receives around \$3 from the international price and around \$3 from the American support program, which brings it up to \$6.08 a bushel. Across the border in the riding of the Hon. Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Gustafson), which borders Montana-North Dakota, farmers are producing wheat for not much more than half of what the Americans receive when they sell their grain to the same customers around the world. For that reason, the country as a whole must support our farmers at this time with a big deficiency payment.

Another thing that makes it tough on us is that it is not only the support prices in Europe and the United States, but the Europeans and the Americans are also subsidizing the export of grain to many countries around the world. Many of these countries are traditional Canadian markets. I do not have all my files with me today, but I can recall the ballpark figures in many cases.

I recall the American administration trying to sell wheat and barley, for example, to Saudi Arabia, Syria, Israel, India, Yemen, and Algeria with a subsidy of around one-third of the export price. In other words, they will sell grain at \$150 a tonne and subsidize it by about \$50 a tonne. We cannot compete in those kinds of sales with that kind of subsidy.

If we are going to find markets for our grain, we have to sell it to those countries at one-third of what the price should be. Because of that, the initial price for grain in this country has dropped by about 19 per cent. I believe barley has dropped by about 27 per cent. Again, it is the farmer who is suffering.

In the last provincial election campaign in Saskatchewan, I had a chance to visit around 20 different ridings. Approximately 15 were rural ridings. Everywhere I saw farmers in a worse situation now than they have been in since the 1930s. Those farmers are looking for leadership from all three political Parties. Those farmers want us to come up with the answers. They want to know that we are on their side. If we help farmers out they produce food and, if they produce food, jobs are created across the country, particularly for young people.

● (1600)

Let us look at unemployment rates. In the last four years unemployment rates have risen in the Province of Saskatchewan and in the Province of Alberta, primarily because of difficulties in agriculture and also in oil. I notice the Hon. Member for Pembina (Mr. Van de Walle) is in the House. I congratulate him on his win. I understand that his colleagues call him "Landslide Wally". Perhaps that is appropriate for Alberta, but I am sure he realizes the kind of reaction there can be among people when they are afraid of the future when it comes to agriculture and oil production. In that it means jobs, the country should be coming to the support of the oil industry and of the agricultural industry in a time of trouble.

Those are some of the things we must do. Canadian farmers are asking for leadership in the House and across the provinces. Regardless of our jostling back and forth in the House on whether we did better than the Conservative Party or vice versa in the Saskatchewan election, the reality of the matter is that farmers are looking for all politicians to come to their rescue and do whatever they can. They are now suffering through no fault of their own.

I should like to make another point. I mentioned deficiency payments and support prices. Of course we are debating the Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act, so technically these things are out of order. However, we are speaking about the over-all problem, which is one reason I want the matter before the committee.

Another issue mentioned by the Premier of Saskatchewan in his campaign worth talking about is the production of farm chemicals in Saskatchewan or in western Canada in general. I support the idea. I am glad it was mentioned in the Saskatchewan election campaign. Last February, at the urging of a few dozen farmers, I introduced into the House a Private Member's Bill on generic farm chemicals. I hope the House will have a chance to discuss the idea of generic farm chemicals as soon as possible. There are large multinational companies such as Monsanto which are ripping off farmers by charging much too high a price for chemicals such as Round-up. The House should move to change the patent laws by reducing the patent from a 17-year monopoly to four years or five years, so that we can have production of generic farm chemicals in Canada just like we produce generic pharmaceuticals. If we could do that, we could entice westerners in particular to produce generic chemicals in western Canada.

Part of the solution was suggested by the Premier of Saskatchewan when he talked about chemical plants. However, I think the other solution can be determined in the House of Commons by changing the patent laws so that we can do this basically at cost for western Canadian farmers. I am not interested in paying high prices for farm chemicals. If we look at Round-up, for example, we find that Monsanto recovers its research and development costs every 24 days because of its sales around the world. Round-up is actually sold in Australia for half the price it is sold here in Canada. These are things which we as parliamentarians can change. We can do for farm chemicals what the country did many years ago for pharmaceuticals. We can change the patent laws so that big companies do not have 17-year exclusive monopolies, so that we can produce farm chemicals at cost and provide them at a much lower price to farmers across Canada.

A very thorough study of the issue was done by the Senate last year. The Senate is not full of radicals; it is a rather conservative institution, a conservative body. The Senate said that we should have generic farm chemicals, that we should get rid of long patents, and that if we did that chemicals could be produced at a much lower price. I think we should take it a