

*The Budget—Mr. Castleden*

for our large crops of grain. The uncertainty of the situation was emphasized by the minister's statement in this house a week or so ago to the effect that he hoped this year to obtain the delivery of seven bushels per acre on our specified acreage by July 31 next. Seven bushels per acre amounts to approximately fourteen bushels per seeded acre which is approximately one-half of the 1953 crop in many areas of the west. The minister admits that, under present circumstances, the western producer cannot hope to deliver more than seven bushels.

There are two essentials in this situation which the people have a right to expect from this government. The first is that if the producer is to be placed in the impossible position of being unable to get a sufficient return from his crop to cover the cost of producing that crop, then he must have access to some means which will permit him to continue his production. The second essential to the farmer's well-being is that in each community there should be provided distribution of deliveries. In my own community there are farmers today who, because of their inability to deliver grain, are left in a position where they cannot meet the payments on their purchases of farm machinery and trucks. Already the implement companies and the automobile companies are repossessing farm machinery.

If these farmers lived in some portions of Alberta where the crop deliveries have been up to some seven bushels and more they would be able to meet these payments and would not suffer these losses. I want to know by what right the people in one portion of the prairies should be penalized and have to take extra losses because of the failure of this government to equitably distribute the right to deliver grain. In one area the farmers have only three or four bushels delivered, while others have seven or eight bushels delivered, and the difference would mean that a man would not have to suffer the loss he is today suffering because of this unequal distribution.

One of the tragedies of the situation has been the optimism with which the ministers have misled the people. People reading reports from the ministers here would imagine everything was all right; they would be able to deliver the grain all right and that wheat in the bin is as good as cash in the bank. Unfortunately, it is not. Many of these farmers who are having their implements repossessed have wheat in their bins, but they cannot dispose of it; it is not cash. To solve this problem I am going to recommend that the government should immediately

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undertake some arrangement whereby advances could be made to farmers on properly stored farm grain. This move need not cost the government very much. It could be done through the wheat board. Ultimately, we hope that grain will be sold and the money then could be paid back to the government out of the selling price of the grain. Such an arrangement exists across the border in the United States, where the farmer is guaranteed 90 per cent of parity. If the farmer cannot deliver the grain, government officials inspect the bins on the farm and he gets an advance. This enables the communities to carry on. The situation is entirely different in western Canada.

The other thing that would help give some justice to these people would be some method for the equitable distribution of box cars. This would enable farmers to get the cash necessary to carry on their ordinary operations. Tax arrears in many parts of my own constituency have not been bigger than they are at the present time for over twelve years. Retailers are unable to collect advances they have made to farmers, and farmers are unable to make their scheduled payments. One would expect a clear-cut statement from the minister about this situation, because it is one of the big problems facing this government, and in addition the minister had attended the FAO conference. We thought the food and agriculture organization would meet and out of that would come a solution of the problem of disposing of our great surplus.

"But when the minister returned with the communique issued at the conclusion of this gathering we received no clear-cut statement. The communique, of which the Minister of Trade and Commerce approved, is woolly and indefinite. It is not at all like the one for which we had hoped from practical men of affairs who had the power to translate their decisions into law." That is the opinion of one paper in the west which represents a large group of the wheat pool producers.

This government would do a great deal towards restoring the confidence of the people in it if they would make a statement of the facts and tell the people what they can expect. The government should guarantee the equitable distribution of box cars, and last fall should have told the farmers what they could expect in the way of delivery so the farmers could have planned their production in line with that information. To pretend that all is well when it is not is to condemn those people to an unnecessary and a brutal hardship, and at a time like this that is not good.

There are one or two things which the minister could have done to help restore the