

Business of Supply

including ultimately the government, to make adequate use of our grain storage facilities in Canada. The extent of the government's failure lies mainly in the fact that until recently it relied on the voluntary co-operation of the owners and operators of the storage facilities, the labour unions, the railways, the exporters and all others involved in the movement and storage of grain. This co-operation has not been forthcoming in adequate measure.

Mr. Yewchuk: Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the hon. member a question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Athabasca (Mr. Yewchuk) is rising to ask a question. I should point out that it is the option of the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Douglas) to accept the question or not.

Mr. Douglas (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I have about 20 minutes to deliver the material I have here. If at the end of my speech I have time, I will be glad to answer questions. Hon. members will recall that I have on several occasions urged the government to follow a previous precedent and appoint a transport controller who would have control over boxcar distribution as well as terminal and other storage facilities. If this had been done a year or more ago, I believe grain farmers, the grain trade and all Canada would be better off today. However, this was not done, partly because the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) had too many other important things to look after and was forced to accept bad advice given him by some of his advisors.

Most farmers, and I hope most hon. members, were very pleased and encouraged when the government appointed the Minister without Portfolio, the hon. member for Saskatoon-Humboldt as the minister in charge of the Wheat Board, who would devote his full time to the urgent problems of the grain industry. By doing this the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the government indicated their concern for western farmers. They showed that they recognized the size and the seriousness of the problem by giving one minister exclusive responsibility for the Wheat Board and for the grain industry, something that had never happened before. I say again that this was a tremendous forward step.

One of the benefits we have already derived from that unprecedented appointment was evidenced in the recent announcement by the minister of the appointment of a co-ordinator for the movement of grain and the

operation of the terminals at the port of Vancouver. A detailed study had proved the need for such a co-ordinator. In response to a question I asked in the House, the minister indicated that a similar co-ordinator will likely be appointed for Thunder Bay before navigation opens in early April.

● (8:20 p.m.)

Farmers are very pleased with these appointments because they indicate the government is genuinely concerned about the past bottlenecks and difficulties and is willing to do something to prevent a recurrence. They also hold the promise of a better service being provided to our customers. This eventually should be reflected in better sales, which is the best way to solve our grain problems. This should always be uppermost in the mind of those who attempt to find solutions. I am sure it is the primary concern of the minister in charge of the Wheat Board.

I should like to warn the minister again that I am not as confident as he concerning the ability or willingness of the railroads to move the large quantities of grain which will have to be moved in the last four months of this crop year. I urge him to watch their performance very closely and to immediately appoint a boxcar controller if they fall even a little way behind. For heaven's sake do not let them put off measures to effectively equalize quotas until the last month or two. It cannot be done in this manner, and if it were attempted we would again be in the intolerable situation we experienced last summer.

Grain farmers have three main concerns. The first is that they want as much grain as possible moved into the markets. Second, they want an equitable sharing of those markets among grain producers through an improved quota system. Third, they want the best possible price consistent with the first two objectives. Incidentally, the rational and orderly use of our storage facilities would probably save the farmers money.

In passing may I also say I am happy to note that a special committee has been set up to make specific proposals in the very near future regarding revision of the grain quota system. I suggest to anyone interested who reads or hears these words that he or she should immediately submit to the Wheat Board their ideas about quota reform. I also point out to the minister the urgency of publicizing the new quota regulations before spring seeding starts, because they could have an important effect on rationalization of production.