

interior government elevators are concerned, they too have been as nonchalant regarding this matter as has been the government. In November the total amount dried in internal elevators was 372,000 bushels; in December, 1,042,000 bushels, and up to January 17, 833,000. What does this mean? It is just further evidence of the fact that this government has no appreciation of the seriousness of the emergency on the prairies.

• (12:20 p.m.)

Recently the minister was in Saskatoon speaking to the annual meeting of the chamber of commerce and he carefully refrained from dealing with this problem but instead gave his views as to the appropriateness and worthwhileness of rule 16A. He said how helpful it was and that if it had been enacted it would have been beneficial to democracy as a whole and to parliamentary government in particular. He stayed away from the problem that the farmers face.

I doubt that this government has any knowledge whatever of the feelings of frustration among the farmers of western Canada. The Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) told us today that he is going to the coast to see how things are at the port of export. I wish he would go to Saskatchewan, Manitoba or Alberta and make a couple of speeches there. I am sure he would be received with hospitality and kindness. I am also sure he would be received with the utmost disdain for the attitude of this government in failing to act.

What have we here? We have a measure which in my opinion constitutes a piddling attempt to meet a serious problem. The farmers are going to be allowed to secure advances up to \$600 to enable them to dry their wheat. The marketing of wheat is in a serious position because the government will not act and will not appoint a traffic controller even though at this very moment some 7,000 or 8,000 Canadian freight cars which should be in Canada and have the capacity to carry wheat are in the United States. Why is something not done in that direction? Only one quarter of the driers are being used in Saskatchewan because of the fact that the cold weather has made it impossible to utilize the driers that are there. This bill is just a makeshift measure designed to conceal the failure of this government to act.

We see the same thing happening in every field. We had an example today when I asked the Secretary of State for External Affairs

Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act

(Mr. Sharp) what is being done about Iraq. The answer was that the government has not had any word yet. It is a nonchalant government, a non-active government, a government that produces a just society that is unjust to everybody, and in particular at the moment to the farmers of western Canada.

What will this measure do? It will enable the farmers to borrow some more money without paying interest thereon for the purpose of doing work which the government should be contributing to doing rather than passing the buck to the farmer. The minister stated a moment ago that the responsibility in this matter lies with the farmer. That philosophy may be all right in Ottawa, but I would like the minister to utter remarks of this kind in western Canada. It is something that is totally unjustifiable. There is no use trying to press the government to act.

The Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce is engaged at the moment in a deep conversation when we are dealing with a problem for which his responsibility is very great and in which his conduct has been apathetic from the beginning. This government will not act, as was apparent when the minister said today that it lies with the farmers to dry their own wheat. If this is how the minister exercises his responsibility, I can only say that the situation for the western farmer is hopeless. The government is saying to him: "We will advance you the money up to the extent of \$600 so that you can do the drying", when the fact is that it cannot be done because of climatic conditions and because of the shortage of driers available for the purpose. This is just another example of buck-passing in place of action.

What should the government have done? Why is action not being taken, this being a national emergency more serious than any in the last 35 years in western Canada? Why is assistance not being given? The Wheat Pool and other organizations have asked for a direct grant to the farmer. I noticed that the minister did not deal with that phase at all. The bill calls for the provincial and federal governments to assist the individual farmer with a direct payment of 5 cents per bushel for wheat that is dried up to a maximum of \$200 per farmer. There is no excuse for leaving this problem on the shoulders of the western farmer as suggested a few moments ago by the minister as a solution to the problem. Our position in western Canada is a desperate one and calls for action from the government.