

*Grain*

These farm problems are always regional. When they occur the farmers get after their members of parliament to do something about them. Unfortunately, there is insufficient action on the part of the government. Some years ago we had an opportunity to consider the problems in respect of wheat production. The committee on agriculture at that time presented a report to this house, but obviously the minister has not read it. He is not aware of the recommendations that committee made. Had those recommendations been implemented many of the problems in respect of box cars would have been alleviated.

It is my opinion that the minister should not have control of the Canadian Wheat Board. This government agency has been transferred from one minister to another over the years. I have a great deal of respect for this minister who has inherited this responsibility. Since I have been a member of this house the responsibility for the wheat board has rested with the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of Trade and Commerce and one or two others.

Perhaps the minister should consider putting the wheat board under the direction of one of the ministers without portfolio because this agency is responsible for many problems which affect the entire country. The production and sale of wheat is an important part of our economy. I do not know what ministers without portfolio do, but one of them should interest himself in this matter.

The minister responsible for this government agency is now handling an extremely important portfolio and the addition of this responsibility is ridiculous. To throw the Wheat Board, which is a major responsibility, on top of his other responsibilities is idiotic. The minister has great capacity but I am sure that even he cannot pay full attention to these four major responsibilities. I suggest that at least two of them, and probably all of them, are running into some difficulty because of his inability to cope with all these problems.

One had only to look at the minister's desk this evening to realize how much responsibility he has. He had on his desk a pile of correspondence that he had been answering for four or five hours. And this is on overtime; it is not done in normal hours.

The Wheat Board is an important agency, but let us face another problem. The chairman of the Wheat Board is a great propagandist. He has a personal machine that never allows him to come out at the worst end of

any question or mistake that may occur. The minister or somebody else may be blamed for a mistake, but in my experience Mr. McNamara will not be blamed—and my experience covers a long period of time. The chairman of the Wheat Board does a good job and looks after himself.

Many things could be done to solve this problem. There have been in the past a great many problems in this industry. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) thinks he has to defend himself against all these problems. He does not. I do not think all members of parliament would accuse him of having been responsible for the weather, the mistakes created because of the quota system or those of the industry. They may. However, I think they would be speaking figuratively and really would not hold the Minister of Agriculture directly responsible for all these problems. But they hold the government responsible in the sense that action could be taken to solve the problems but it has not been taken.

The government has not taken action to solve the problems faced by this industry. One or two solutions to the problems were contained in the report of the committee which studied the matter. First, we have a very lousy transportation system for moving grain. We obviously cannot continue to handle the quotas produced by the farmer. The committee said that if any emergency arose we would be in serious trouble. We had probably the best co-operation in respect of our transportation facilities, the country elevators and terminal elevators in the ports of Vancouver, Prince Rupert and at the head of the lakes for a period of two or three years when we handled much more than we should have been able to handle with the facilities at our disposal.

In respect of this industry we are operating out of a box car. We do not operate the potash industry or any other industry in this country to the best advantage. Modernization will have to take place in the grain elevators and other facets of the agricultural industry. It does not behoove us to continue the practice we have followed in the past. We must build new elevators. We should not use elevators which were designed 50 years ago simply because the people in the community have a vested interest in them.

We would be much better off if we built elevators which had drying facilities in them. Farmers should not have to have drying facilities on their farms. There may be a drought for three years, good crops for five