

Wheat Export Prices

we not take the lead and try to show them that we have a responsibility which goes beyond the immediate economic situation of the day? The article continues:

Canada's fertile fields should not be permitted to lie fallow when the world needs their production.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. McBride: Would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Thompson: I only have a few minutes left. The hon. member can ask his question afterwards.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Thompson: I am merely following the pattern of the Minister of Agriculture and of other speakers who have preceded me on the other side of the house. What we need is a long term agricultural policy in addition to short range and urgent help which must be given now. What kind of pressure and what kind of demonstration will move the Trudeau government to this kind of action?

The crisis is here now. Unless we do something in this regard so far as Canadian agricultural industry is concerned we will be into an economic crisis before too many months have passed, one that we cannot even visualise now. The Canadian economy cannot afford the consequences of further delay. While it may help farmers for the few months during the harvest period to get an advance on the grain that they are not able to sell, unless we bring in some policies such as the ones that have been suggested here not only from this side of the house but, for example, such as the very sound ones that have been made by the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Douglas) we are going to destroy the basic industry of this country which is still agriculture. This industry is the strength and backbone not only of our economy at home but also of our whole foreign policy in our relations with the countries less fortunate than ours.

Mr. McBride: Will the hon. member permit a question?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): The hon. member will need the unanimous consent of the house since the time allotted the hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Thompson) has expired.

Mr. John Burton (Regina East): The need for this debate has arisen because of the lack
[Mr. Thompson.]

of government action and policies to deal with the crisis that is facing western Canada at the present time.

Mr. Gibson: Nonsense.

Mr. Burion: You do not know anything about it. This afternoon and this evening we heard two ministers of the government take part in this debate. The Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) in his genial way took us around the world and dealt with the international grain picture. I think that most members are aware of some of the problems that exist. I cannot say that his review added to the knowledge of hon. members in this regard, but I have no objection to his pointing out some of the factors that exist in the international grain markets.

• (10:40 p.m.)

The minister went on to list a number of things he suggested had been done by the government and that the government was doing to deal with the present situation. He pointed, of course, to a number of policies which were in fact introduced prior to the coming to office of the Liberal administration. Then we had the speech of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson). It seemed to me that when the Minister of Agriculture was preparing his notes for this debate he must have written a marginal note in which he said: Case weak. Shout like hell. I say this because I was very disappointed in the contribution of the minister. He first of all suggested that the major problem is cash flow. All hon. members will recognize that there is a cash flow problem. But surely if the Minister of Agriculture and other ministers of this administration have not as yet recognized that there is a more basic economic problem facing the agricultural industry in western Canada, they are not exhibiting a very high degree of competence.

The minister went on to reject one of the proposals put forward by hon. members, namely, acreage payments. I recognize that there are pros and cons with respect to the administration of acreage payments. However, I suggest it is one way of providing a cash injection into the western Canadian economy that would bolster the general economic picture. Other proposals have been made. My colleague the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Gleave) proposed a series of deficiency payments which could achieve the same end and possibly avoid some of the administrative problems referred to by the Minister of Agriculture. However, the minister did not deal with that proposal.