

Alleged Failure to Aid Western Farmers

Mr. Pepin: The problem has been resolved. The farmers did a magnificent job, and so did the Canadian government. The measures that we took should be in every member's mind because they were mentioned this afternoon by the Minister of Agriculture. Credit was made available. On an emergency basis cash grants were made for drying purposes. Advance quotas for high moisture grain were given by the Canadian Wheat Board. I will remember the members of the opposition crying "Too late, too late". Then, when difficulties developed they cried "Too early, too early". One would wish they would consult among themselves. C. D. Howe apparently said that there was no such thing as a wheat expert. I think that statement is proved every day in this house. I do not pretend to be an expert myself but how members of the opposition can claim to be experts is beyond my understanding.

Co-ordination of drying facilities in terminals was made by the Canadian Wheat Board, the Board of Grain Commissioners, terminal operators and the railways. The government gave remission of duty on imported commercial dryers. It also gave accelerated depreciation for farm drying units acquired in the current crop year. That was enough to solve the problem. Still ringing in my ears are the cries of "Resign, resign". If I resigned each time the members of the opposition thought I should this would be a full-time job.

Again it is easy for the opposition to come up with "solutions". Some members of the opposition remind me very much of jugglers who are throwing 20 plates in the air hoping to catch one. When they do, they never speak about the 19 others.

With regard to the difficulties experienced in Vancouver, I remember how I was laughed at when I tried to explain that these difficulties were in great part due to the weather. Again the opposition shouted "tragedy". They charged that my department should have been given to a westerner. This hurt a little. The railways were damned as well as the Transportation Committee. It was said that the co-ordinator should take over. Even the Wheat Board was slightly chastized. God himself had to come in for some chastizement.

Mr. Downey: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, under the new rules is there no protection given members of this house from this sort of inconsequential chatter while we are discussing such an important problem?

Mr. Pepin: Mr. Speaker, of all the people I can think of, especially having heard the hon. member's speech in which he referred to just about everything under the sun, he is the last who should complain.

Let me return to the Vancouver difficulties. I remember hon. members saying that our sales to the Pacific would be lost, that this would be a terrible year. They were almost counting the number of sales that would be lost. Hon. members may be glad to know that our exports of wheat from the west coast as of June 4 this year amounted to 122.5 million bushels as compared to 112 million last year. That is not a bad record for a government that is supposedly responsible for losing sales from the west coast.

I am not trying to claim this is a wonderful record, an extraordinary one; I am just trying to put the case in its proper perspective, because I think that is greatly needed after the speeches we heard.

A few days ago the hon. member for Churchill (Mr. Simpson) was crying out loud, almost making himself sick, because the port of Churchill would have no work at all. I cannot tell the house exactly what the sales program is for Churchill this year, but I am advised by the Canadian Wheat Board that despite well known difficulties it is anticipated that a good level of exports will pass through that important port. At least one member of the opposition should speak for the Canadian Wheat Board and the government tonight, but again I understand this is asking for too much. Tomorrow, the hon. member for Churchill will be asking me how much more he can expect, but I will have to admit to him that the record will not be beaten this year.

This afternoon it was again suggested that the government is not doing everything it can do to help the Wheat Board market wheat properly. I should like to know what it is that we have failed to do in the last year to help the Canadian Wheat Board market wheat. Have we suspended the food aid program? I ask hon. members to note the following interesting statistic. The government has increased food aid shipments, principally of wheat and flour, from the austerity level of \$4.5 million in 1962-63, when a certain government was in office, to the current level of \$70 million. I ask hon. members to note that increase from \$4.5 million to \$70 million. Members of the opposition may say that the level of exports was higher at that time than now, but that is not true. In 1962-63 the level