

Grain

inland terminal because they could not find No. 2 wheat all down the line. In the midst of my constituency, north, south and west, there was No. 2 wheat—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I am sad to have to interrupt the hon. member but his time has expired.

Mr. Gundlock: I shall take only one more moment, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member may continue only if he has the unanimous consent of the house. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Yes.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: I regret to say that apparently there are some objections.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): First of all, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I am rising to participate in this debate because I know that in the constituency I come from this is an emergency not only to the farming population of the area but to the entire population of Yorkton-Melville, and indeed to all the people of Saskatchewan. The crisis, as I see it, has been building up for a number of years. It has not happened only because of things that occurred recently. Basically it is an accumulation of many things.

The farmer has been caught in a cost-price squeeze. The costs of farm production have been going up, indeed skyrocketing. The costs of farm machinery, fertilizers, even land, and all the other commodities a farmer has to use to produce a bushel of wheat have increased. Meanwhile the price the farmer is getting for a bushel of wheat and many other commodities has not been increasing substantially and at times has been falling. Because of the crisis we also have in Saskatchewan and in the western part of Canada this year a lack of cash for the farmer. Farmers need cash if they want to continue in the farming industry. In addition, bank interest rates have gone up and the farmer has a much more difficult time borrowing the money he needs to keep his operation going. Not only will this have a drastic effect this year but it will cause disruptions in following years in the agricultural industry in western Canada. Furthermore, it is not only the farm community that is affected but the rest of the economy as well.

For example, when wheat is not moving we know that the farmer is not going to be selling wheat. As a result he will not be buying

commodities, and when commodities are not purchased by the farmer the businesses directly involved in supplying him will be affected as well. In other words, all sectors of the economy are affected. Basically every person in western Canada is a farmer whether he is living on a farm or not, because either directly or indirectly his prosperity is tied to the farming economy.

Just this evening, Mr. Speaker, I was talking to a person who runs a furniture store in the small town of Canora at the northern end of my constituency. He tells me that his sales have gone down drastically this year as a result of the crisis in the farming industry. He also talked about other businessmen in his community. Some of them, particularly in the machinery business, have seen their sales go down by over 80 per cent. This is the kind of thing that is occurring especially in the smaller centres in Saskatchewan.

I was talking to another man from the small village of Jedburgh, and I was told that in that place the elevator will be closed down for a month if grain does not start moving. They have not got the necessary box cars. The grain produced in that area is tough, damp and of inferior quality. What have we got to combat this situation? Increased interest rates! The farmer is having a much more difficult time getting the necessary cash to run his operation.

I would also like to submit, as other hon. members have done, that the crisis in the grain industry today is a national emergency. It has repercussions for the entire Canadian economy. That is why we should be concerned, no matter what part of the country we come from. That is why we should try to clear up the problem confronting us today. It is a problem that is affecting many other industries.

One thing I would like to comment on that has really made me quite sick and mad throughout the debate so far is the statistics that have been quoted by various cabinet ministers, in fact by all three who have spoken in the debate, as well as by the other government members. They tell us how things have improved in western Canada during the last few years, but anybody who has been out west knows that things are not good enough. We know they have not improved.

At any rate, you cannot tell the farmers that they have improved. They know they have not.