

was damaged by rain. Furthermore, I am sure they have not forgotten the bungling and mismanagement in loading their ships in Vancouver harbour this winter. We have seen many trade junkets to Asia and Japan but we have seen no action, no orders, no sales, no sales programs—just lots of talk.

I suppose that now we shall have to wait perhaps for the resignation of the Minister of Agriculture before any action is taken with regard to western agriculture. The business community in the area to which I referred has also felt these adverse effects. During the period from January 1 to April 30, 1969, the area to which I referred experienced the following decrease in the level of sales as compared with the corresponding period last year. Machinery sales have decreased by 66 per cent; sales of fertilizer have decreased some 60 per cent; feed and prepared supplements have decreased by 15 per cent; hardware supplied by 38 per cent; clothing supplies by 20 per cent; machinery repairs by 55 per cent; and groceries by 10 per cent. So, it becomes very evident that if conditions of this nature continue hardship will be caused in the business community as well. Furthermore, there is a very strong indication of the fact that accounts receivable are being consolidated, and abnormal borrowings are being negotiated from banks and other lending institutions to liquidate accounts receivable which are being carried by the local business concerns. In other words, it would appear that farmers in this area are living on borrowed time.

• (10:20 p.m.)

We on this side of the house are rather disappointed at the government's lack of concern for western agriculture. We are also disappointed about the attitude of some of the western cabinet ministers. I do not refer particularly to the Minister of Agriculture. Many of the questions we pose during the question period are answered in a flippant or arrogant manner, as if to say these matters are none of our concern. In many cases we get no answer at all. Farmers are at a loss to know what to plant this year. Many are turning to coarse grains and oil seeds. Here, too, we must follow an aggressive sales policy; surely, we can produce far more than we can feed to our own livestock. I cannot understand our failure to develop the potential of the feed grain markets of eastern Canada. This being so, how can we expect to sell our produce abroad? The point I am making is that our marketing arrangements as a whole are in

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need of a major shake-up. I believe the policies of the Wheat Board have to become more flexible and ought to be upgraded. This is where government leadership is necessary, and until it is provided some form of assistance must be forthcoming.

I, therefore, plead with the government, asserting that western agriculture requires help, and requires it badly, now. Let it be in the form of an acreage payment or of a direct grant, or in the form of supplementary income to provide farmers with a decent living as a short term measure. If something is not done soon, the wave of protests we are now witnessing could grow and expand, conceivably leading to a form of violence. The agriculture community is communicating a message, Mr. Speaker. I take this opportunity to warn the government that it had better pick up the receiving unit and start listening. It had better start listening carefully to these submissions and institute proposals for overcoming a condition which could well develop into a crisis more severe than any we have witnessed before.

Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of Agriculture):

I think the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) would agree that in the three minutes allowed to me to reply I could not make even a cursory examination of all the economic factors involved in the subjects he raised.

I would remind him that the Standing Committee on Agriculture is now in the process of preparing recommendations following its observations during a tour of western Canada when a first hand look was taken at some of the areas affected by the problems the hon. member has raised.

In the question he asked yesterday, the hon. member had something to say about the timing of government programs and policies for dealing with these measures. If the government were to make an announcement respecting precisely the matters which the committee is considering, it would not show the kind of respect I have for this house and for its committees. Surely, if the committee is prepared to come forward with a report in a very few days, the government ought to respect it sufficiently at least to provide enough time for the preparation of that report, which is being done, as far as I am aware, as rapidly as possible.

I am sure we intend to take very seriously the observations and recommendations of that committee. After all, that was the purpose of the tour of western Canada by the committee