

trade concessions to Japan in order to sell more wheat to that country. I presume there have been no further wheat sales to Japan this crop year, and I expect none. Instead of paying the Japanese \$160,000 we should have sent them more wheat.

Although the minister suggests that repayment of farm credit loans be deferred, I say this is no real concession or recognition of the problem facing western farmers. Why doesn't he place a moratorium on the interest payable on these loans? By just postponing repayment and allowing the interest to run, the farmers' debts build up. A moratorium on interest payments would help alleviate the cash difficulty of the farmers.

My ninth point, Mr. Speaker, concerns the minister's statement that there has been a substantial increase in sales promotion. Has it not come a little late? We have had difficulty for something like two years in making wheat sales, in fact for something like four years. But the greatest difficulty has been experienced during the past year. Why announce a substantial increase in sales promotion now? I hope that six months from now the minister will not come back into this house and say once more that there has been another substantial increase in sales promotion. That story is not sufficient, considering the severe cash position in which western farmers find themselves today.

Mr. A. B. Douglas (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I rise to take part in this debate because I am concerned about the problem described in the motion. I am concerned for three main reasons. First, as a Canadian I am concerned about the effect on the Canadian economy of the depressed income of western Canadian grain farmers, especially if this situation is allowed to continue. Most economic depressions in this country have followed closely on the heels of hard times for the farmers, caused by low prices or poor crops, or both. I think the government should consider this aspect of the matter very carefully when deciding what is to be done to relieve the situation.

Secondly, I am concerned because most of the farmers in my constituency are grain producers. Not only that but the urban communities in my area are also mainly dependent on a healthy, thriving agriculture. I was elected at least partly because I am a farmer myself, and my constituents believed I would speak for them. Therefore I welcome this opportunity to again try to impress upon the

Alleged Failure to Aid Western Farmers
government the urgent necessity of prompt remedial action.

● (8:40 p.m.)

My third reason is probably a selfish one. Several members of my family are personally experiencing this critical cash shortage referred to in the motion we are debating. This cash shortage is particularly hard on young farmers who are trying to get established. Many young people, relying on optimistic forecasts from politicians, Canadian and international food experts and others, went deeply into debt for land and machinery in recent years. Now, they are unable to meet their commitments. On that score alone, because government officials were among those who said that there was an unlimited market for our grain, I say that the government has a responsibility to give some meaningful support to the grain industry. The time will come, and it may not be far away, when our grain will again be in demand. We should see to it that these producers, especially the younger ones, are retained in agriculture because we will need them in the future.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as has been stated by others, the main requirement and the best remedy is to sell the wheat. This may require a fresh approach. I note that the government has recently appointed Mr. Charles Gibbings to the Wheat Board. Farmers and farm organizations have been asking for representation on the Wheat Board. This government has complied with that request. Charles Gibbings is not only a practical Saskatchewan farmer, but has served for many years as president of one of the most successful and influential farm organizations in Canada and, indeed, in the world, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. I am sure that if any improvement is needed in the operation of the Canadian Wheat Board, Charlie Gibbings will see that it is made. I want to publicly congratulate Mr. Gibbings on his appointment and also congratulate the government on taking the step of acquiring his services. I am sure the overwhelming majority of western farmers will join in the applause.

Speaking in the debate this afternoon, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) outlined some of the things that the government has done for the western grain farmers. Some opposition speakers made light of some of these programs. It may be that these programs have not been sufficient to take care of all the problems which stem largely from reduced markets. I am sure, however, that most reasonable people would admit that