

Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act

financial difficulty and feel that by taking advantage of these advances they are being pushed further into debt. Hundreds of millions of bushels of damp grain are involved, and it would seem to me to be good business on the part of the government to provide a direct subsidy to the farmers to induce them to dry their grain. I do not feel that the subsidy should cover the entire cost of grain drying but it should cover at least a part of it. There is much to be done and the time is short. I hope the government will consider a direct subsidy as a partial payment in respect of the cost of drying grain in order that it may be stored and not completely lost in the year ahead.

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre):

Mr. Speaker, I concur with those hon. members who have spoken before me to the extent that I am not opposed to this legislation, but I must, as members of this party have done earlier, protest against its gross inadequacy and terrible unfairness. As has been suggested in this chamber in months past, when a situation occurs such as that in respect of the harvest in western Canada last fall it constitutes something more than just a problem for farmers. It constitutes a national problem which should be solved by the entire nation. The cost of providing such a solution should not be borne entirely by the farmers but by the nation as a whole.

Earlier the Minister without Portfolio (Mr. Lang) talked about panic on the part of members on this side of the house which he alleged occurs every time the farmers face a problem. It is not panic, sir, but anger, frustration and a feeling of being completely fed up. The farmers on the prairies do not panic very easily. Nor do the members of this house who come from the prairies panic very easily. Farmers have to put up with wet years and dry years. They have to put up with being up to their eyeballs in wheat some years and having no wheat at all in other years. In recent years there have been only one or two occasions when there has been above normal rainfall, and the past fall was the worst of all. In spite of this, the farmers have in the past been able to survive and cope with all situations. In the dirty thirties they had to put up with dust, grasshoppers and gophers. They can cope with all these things but when they have to cope with a Liberal government as well it is a little too much to expect of them.

This is not the first time a federal Liberal government has been inadequate, apathetic and deadly slow in providing fair treatment

[Mr. Ritchie.]

on behalf of the entire nation to the agricultural industry. When we are talking about the cost of putting cereal crops in western Canada into good condition for marketing we are talking about something which will cost at least \$70 million and could reach \$100 million. We cannot expect the farmers to bear the entire cost. That would be unfair, unjust and unthinkable. Any government of any political party which comes up with this kind of inadequate measure without really accepting its share on behalf of the whole nation is failing in its responsibilities.

A number of farm organizations have submitted proposals to the government, but I have yet to hear a single minister, or a member on the government side of the house respond in this house or in any public manner to these proposals. As far as I know the government has not even had the courtesy to reply to these organizations or tell them why these proposals cannot be implemented.

The Saskatchewan Farmers' Union submitted a lengthy proposal dealing with the drying of grain in which it was outlined how it could be transported from the farmer's yard to the dryers and back. The union recommended and pleaded for a schedule of payments to cover part of this cost. It suggested that from last August 1 to the end of February a maximum of 12 cents per bushel should be paid to the farmers for drying, from March 1 to April 30, 10 cents per bushel, and from May 1 till the end of the crop year, 5 cents per bushel. I do not know whether the government has even replied to this proposal. I hope the minister or someone on that side of the house will indicate whether a reply has been made and, if so, what it contained. If an unfavourable reply has been made I hope someone will explain why it was unfavourable.

During an earlier debate the hon. member for Saskatoon-Humboldt (Mr. Lang) suggested to hon. members on this side of the house that there was a fundamental message that should be passed on to members from central and eastern Canada. I think we have got this message across to the members who sit on this side of the house. I should like to know whether the hon. member has succeeded in getting the message across to other members on the government side.

We have said time and again that of all the occupational groups in this country the one group which has no say about how much it is to be paid for its labour and its investment is made up of the farmers. When this group asks for fair and reasonable assistance in