

Statements by Ministers

Mr. Gormley: We are the Government that gets the job done.

An Hon. Member: What did you ever do?

Mr. Foster: The Minister knows full well that essentially what he is providing here is an interest-free loan of \$3,000 until the grain is delivered.

The Minister did not bother mentioning that the Canadian Wheat Board estimated this morning that some 80 per cent to 90 per cent of the grain has been harvested. As I understand the provisions of the Act, this interest-free loan will apply only to the drying of grain. For anything that has already been dried on which money has been spent by literally thousands of prairie farmers, no interest-free loan will be available to them.

We must realize that we are talking about a \$2 billion to \$3 billion disaster on the Prairies because of last summer's drought. This interest-free loan coming at this stage, with only 10 per cent or 15 per cent of the crop left, clearly will be an advantage and helpful to some producers, but it does not address the major problem, namely the drought.

Clearly the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and other groups, including the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner), have called on the Government to make available a \$50 per seeded acre acreage payment. When the Progressive Conservatives were in opposition with the support of the provincial Premiers in the summer of 1984, they demanded and received a commitment by the Liberal Government of the day that an acreage payment would be made. People in western Canada want to know when the acreage payment for the drought disaster will be made, which disaster has not only put the prairie farmers in dire straights but is also making communities in the West suffer tremendously. Surely this payment should have been announced in August just as it was in 1984. We are well into October, and we want to hear what the Government is going to do in that regard.

We want to know as well why the Minister is not announcing today the final payment on the Western Grain Stabilization Fund. Surely there must be at least another \$100 million or \$200 million which is due and payable to the farmers of western Canada. That is what we want to hear. We just do not want to hear about a short-term \$3,000 interest-free loan which will benefit some but which will certainly not benefit those farmers who have suffered as a result of the drought last summer. Neither will it benefit those farmers who have already harvested their grain and carried out their drying operations.

We are thankful for small blessings, even if they are extremely small. Some individual producers who still have not been able to harvest their crop will be helped. This measure does not in any way address the major problems facing western Canada today.

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to hear that the Minister responsible for the Wheat Board has recognized the need for assistance because of the

weather conditions which forced producers to harvest either damp or tough grain.

The \$9, \$11 and \$16 a tonne which the Act allows will be much appreciated by those farmers, particularly those with cash flow problems. The \$3,000 maximum is adequate probably for a large number of those who will be doing the drying where most of the tough and damp grain is found.

The Minister is to be congratulated for the early action he has taken. I can only wish his colleague, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) felt the same urgency in dealing with drought victims. In other parts of the Prairies, the painful irony over which the Minister exclaims is magnified by his Government's inability to come to grips with the larger and more debilitating disaster of drought.

The producers in the drought area have been waiting since July for Government relief. All they have heard about is the possibility of Government relief, but they have had no assurance and no indication of when or if the relief will come, and if it comes whether it will be enough to be of any value to pay for crop failures.

We are pleased the Minister has taken the action which is allowed him by the Prairie Grain Advance Payment Act and has made the loans for drying grain available.

We hope he will take the same quick action after November 15 for those producers who still have unthreshed grain in the field. Those farmers will have as great a need for the possible one-half payment available to them as do the farmers who have no crop because of drought.

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● (1520)

[Translation]

PETITIONS

FULL INDEXATION OF FAMILY ALLOWANCES AND CHILD TAX CREDIT

Mr. Carlo Rossi (Bourassa): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition from the undersigned residents of my federal riding of Montreal-Bourassa, who now avail themselves of their right to present a grievance common to your petitioners, in the certain assurance that Your Honourable House will therefor provide a remedy and that the Government of Canada will reinstate full indexation of family allowances and the child tax credit.

Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition from the undersigned residents of the federal riding of Saint-Michel-Ahuntsic, who now avail themselves of their right to present a grievance common to your petitioners, in the certain assurance that your Honourable House will therefor provide a remedy and that the Government of Canada will reinstate full indexation of family allowances and the child tax credit.