

Wheat Export Prices

problem, and this would be quite an important difference.

I should like to tell the government why this is not the first time that the farmers of Saskatchewan and western Canada have found it necessary to demonstrate when a Liberal government was in power. The same thing occurred in 1946. The farmers picketed the grain elevators and dairies in western Canada, and I was one of those who took part. Circumstances at that time had become so intolerable that the farmers just could not make a living. A few years following the action that we took in 1946 the government was bounced out of power, a very prominent minister of the day having tapped a Manitoban on the tummy and told him that he looked very well fed. Perhaps the farmers look well fed, but I am sure the government knows that the credit unions are strapped for resources to make loans in Saskatchewan at this very moment. Surely, the government's sources of information are as good as mine. Surely, the government knows that banks are being selective in granting loans. They must have this information if they are trying to assess what is the present financial situation of the farmers.

● (9:50 p.m.)

I hope the government will take an honest look at the situation and consider just what is at stake at the present time. What is at stake is the economy of the province of Saskatchewan in particular, that province being the main wheat producer, and that of its two sister provinces of Manitoba and Alberta. Some business people have asked prairie provincial governments to clamp a moratorium on interest rates. This is a business economy and when certain people ask for a moratorium to be clamped on interest rates it is time that the powers that be took notice, because something adverse obviously has happened. The government's real failure is in coming to grips with the existing situation. The Prime Minister has told us we must grow less wheat. He could have saved himself the trip to Saskatchewan if that is all he wanted to tell us. The farmers of the country have reduced the acreage of wheat under cultivation from 29 million acres to 24 million acres in one year, which is a pretty hefty reduction. What are they to grow if they do not grow wheat? That question must be answered by the government and farm organizations. Why has the government not consulted with farm organizations and worked out these matters?

[Mr. Gleave.]

Why has it come to the point that the National Farmers Union and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture are saying their voices are being ignored? Are these organizations not worth talking to?

If you want answers about the automobile industries you talk to automobile manufacturers and labour union representatives in their plants. If you want answers about agriculture, should you not talk to people who have had long experience in agricultural organizations? Believe me, the prairie farmers in particular will not disregard ideas which are valid. They want some kind of direction from the government. They are like sinking men, ready to grasp any rope that is lowered to them. They are willing to try any good idea.

We need to be told frankly what is the situation with respect to the International Grains Arrangement. Reports vary from week to week. One day the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) tells us he has attended a nice meeting in Washington, that everything will calm down and that the national representatives are going back to their country to work out new arrangements. The next day we hear the United States has slashed grain prices by 12 cents a bushel. I do not know what the new, lower Canadian Wheat Board asking price is. Is the farmer not to be told the status of the International Grains Arrangement? If it is not working, why do we not ask representatives of responsible nations which signed the agreement to meet? After all, the agreement was part of the GATT negotiations. Responsible nations negotiated the agreement. Should we not ask them at a meeting, "Look, is this a piece of paper or is it an honourable arrangement reached by honourable representatives of honourable nations?" Why does the government not do that? Are we to wait forever before knowing whether the International Grains Arrangement can be made to work and what the new minimum price is to be? Does the government think for a minute that farmers will survive when prices have dropped from \$1.95½ to \$1.80, \$1.75 and, after that, to \$1.62½ per bushel on the international market, basis Fort William-Port Arthur. With prices like that does the government think for a minute our farmers will remain in business? Surely, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) should know that with these low prices our farmers can not survive. That farmers cannot operate their farms on a \$1 per bushel cash advance for six bushels per cultivated acre. How can anyone operate a farm under these conditions? Some parts of