

who do not already know, that that bill was proclaimed a few days ago.

I also want to say a few words about the small farms development program. As I said at the outset, this is the time for us to deal briefly with what has happened during the past 12 months with respect to a number of agricultural commodities, to outline what the future holds, as one can see it today, and to outline our major thrust in developing and progressing with the programs that are now under way.

Let me say a few words briefly about grain, in the first place, because grain is certainly one of the largest, if not the largest, commodities in Canadian agriculture today. I will not review statistics because members of this House and, of course, farmers in western Canada generally know that in the last crop year we established an all-time record, with sales of 700 million bushels of grain. To date this year our sales have been even greater than that.

**Mr. Benjamin:** But the farmers are still poor.

**Mr. Olson:** I find it rather strange that those who criticize the government and those who participated in today's question period do not understand that when you have an extraordinarily large snowfall day after day and week after week in the mountains, grain deliveries going through that part of the transport system will obviously be slowed down.

**Mr. Benjamin:** Where was the minister last fall?

**Mr. Olson:** That is what happened. Some members of the opposition tried to find some way of showing that this was the government's fault. They tried to suggest that the government was to blame because five feet of snow per week fell for some weeks in the highest reaches of the Rocky Mountains.

**Mr. Benjamin:** Nobody is blaming the government for that.

**Mr. Olson:** The hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin) must know, because of his background, that with that kind of snowfall as much as 50 per cent of rail traffic is curtailed. There were several days when no trains were running at all. Not only that, Mr. Speaker, but after the snowfalls and the tracks have been cleared it is weeks before you get back to full efficiency. Even after a small storm, snowfall or wind, there are tremendous snowdrifts. That slows everything down tremendously. In the past few days, I have been very pleased with the full co-operation of the people involved in that sector of the transportation industry. They have been able to move as much as 800, and sometimes over 800 carloads in a day. We should commend those people in that part of the transportation industry for a great effort.

• (2050)

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Olson:** They are certainly working under a great handicap at this time.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel):** Order, please. Is the hon. member rising on a point of order or for the purpose of asking a question?

*Speech from the Throne*

**Mr. Downey:** I was wondering if the minister would allow a question at this point.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel):** The hon. member knows he can ask a question only if the minister is willing to answer.

**Mr. Olson:** I would be very happy to answer a question.

**Mr. Downey:** Can the minister state whether the government's policy has changed in any respect as to the matter of keeping permanent storage facilities full of grain? What is happening to those? Has there been any change in the government's attitude with regard to this situation?

**Mr. Olson:** There are some other matters involved, Mr. Speaker. Cost factors get into this situation. There is also the question of the maximum beneficial use of the transportation equipment that is available. Surely the hon. member would not suggest that we change the policy and keep any grain in terminals on the west coast when we have an opportunity to load it on ships. As far as the inland terminals are concerned, when there is a maximum requirement we must have as much equipment as possible to move that grain into export position. What is the purpose of holding it in the inland terminals if there is a limitation of facilities, including equipment?

If the time comes, and I am pretty sure it is not going to come until the end of this crop year, when we have additional equipment and transportation facilities with which we can take grain into the inland terminals, clean it to export standards so it will be available, that is one consideration. Even that is not the most beneficial use of all that equipment at this time. As has been pointed out, we need all the grain that we can get to the west coast immediately, because the stocks there are very, very seriously depleted. When we take this into account, we have to remember there is an additional cost of bringing grain into the inland terminals, unloading it and then loading it again. When you have room, both in so far as storage is concerned and capacity for cleaning at the elevators that are in export position, you first use that to the maximum. If there is any capacity left, that is when you bring it into the inland terminals.

There is one point that could be made with respect to farm deliveries at terminals. There is also an opportunity for farmers to deliver to a grain company account at some of the inland terminals if they choose to do so.

**An hon. Member:** Peanuts.

**Mr. Olson:** It might be peanuts, but the grain that comes from that distance also involves some additional cost to the farmer if it gets past 25, 30 miles or up to 50 miles. I certainly would not advocate diverting carloads of grain to inland terminals that can be used immediately on the west coast. That is not the most beneficial use of that equipment and grain at this time.

I certainly hope that the kind of climatic conditions we need to maximize the movement of grain over the mountains and into and through those terminals will be with us. If so, from the performance we have seen in the past few days, it will not be very long, probably in the next three to four weeks, before we catch up with all the commitments we have made. If the weather improves from now on, this