

Wheat Sales

I am sure the department must have had access to that *Globe and Mail* issue as did everybody else. When I look at that article today I realize that we were getting at that time 25 cents less for our wheat than we did 10 years prior to that date. The author of the article analysed what was happening. I want to quote the article to substantiate what the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) has been saying, namely, that the minister has been interfering in the operations of the Wheat Board. The article reads in part:

Finally, it is in the interests of all Canadian wheat producers that prices should be advanced to a point where the producer is no longer dependant on federal government help. It is very doubtful that the Wheat Board today is an independent body. It seems to be operating completely under the direction of the federal government, which can only be expected as long as the board is in a deficit position financially.

So long as the minister kept interfering, the board could not manoeuvre. The board would not have got itself into that position where the stocks in those elevators were depleted. We have lots of elevators, and some of them are being quietly closed up because there is no business for them. Today, we realize the folly of the policy which the government has been pursuing. Now, we cannot act. We do not know what the situation is going to be. The minister says, "Sow everything, up to your doorstep; sow one more field."

● (1720)

I ask the minister will he pay compensation if frost ruins the crop? What about crop insurance? If there were any indication from the minister that some thought was being given to those producers who lose their crops as a result of frost, maybe producers would assist the government. But when it comes to producers, the government has a hands off attitude. Yet it interferes in the operations of the Wheat Board. The minister says the official opposition is attacking the Wheat Board. What a twisting around that is. But the government has the solid backing of one little group in this chamber, and that is enough to maintain it in office. Last year costs of agricultural production went up 10 per cent all across Canada. In the first quarter of this year they went up 6 per cent. I ask, what would be wrong with a policy that, for once, injected a little more cash into the agricultural economy?

For years agriculture was in the doldrums. We had a real slump in 1970-71. Everybody was desperate. I do not know how the prairie farmers hung on. It was only by the grace of God and their own faith, because they did not have any faith in the government. They have demonstrated that election after election. They hung on, and now I think the government should give the farmers the advantage of the higher prices. A very sly comment was made by the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Gleave) to the effect that some member had sold rapeseed futures at a loss of \$1. At this particular time, who can say that the price of rapeseed is not going to drop? Maybe we should sign a contract at the present rate. Maybe we should take advantage when the price is high, instead of continually unloading all the grain at firesale prices.

I cannot imagine any farmer being worried about paying income tax, and for the minister to use that as the reason for farmers holding back wheat deliveries is the weakest

[Mr. Korchinski.]

attempt at a defence that I have seen made by one of the country's better lawyers.

An hon. Member: Better lawyers?

Mr. Korchinski: Yes, he was a dean of law.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but the time allotted to him has expired. However, he could continue if there were unanimous consent.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There is not unanimous consent.

Mr. Joseph-Philippe Guay (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, as a western Canadian familiar with the grains industry on the western prairies, I delight in participating in the debate this afternoon. Over many years I have seen first hand the failures and successes of prairie grain farmers. I lived through the desperate and frustrating years of 1968 and 1969 when our prairie grain elevators and grain terminals were chockfull to the rafters, when markets had dwindled, when prices were falling off, and when there was bitter frustration and anger among our prairie grain farmers.

An hon. Member: Who wrote your speech?

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): These are my own notes, and I do not repeat myself. At least I can make sense when I am speaking.

How very much different is the situation today, only three or four years after the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lang) took on responsibility for the Canadian Wheat Board. In each of the past three years we have set all-time Canadian records in exporting grain.

Mr. Horner (Crowfoot): At what prices?

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): Prices are at their highest level ever. Prairie grain farmers are on the verge of the best year in Canadian history. The despair and frustration of 1968 have given way to the buoyancy and optimism of 1973. What a long way we have come in the grains industry in western Canada during these past four years.

It is strange indeed, with all that has been done in the past three or four years by the government and by the minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board, and with the buoyancy and optimism which exist across the Prairies today, that the Conservative Party should launch this bitter attack—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, I hesitate to interrupt the parliamentary secretary, but I think the hon. member for Crowfoot is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Horner (Crowfoot): My point of order is that the hon. member spoke about prices being the highest ever, but he failed to quote the reference, whether it was that of the DBS, the Canadian Wheat Board figures, or just his own figures.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: This is really a point of debate. I realize that this is one of the more exciting debates that