

*Alleged Failure to Aid Western Farmers*

these offices people are falling over themselves.

The other day I telephoned to see how things were in connection with my income tax position. I got in touch with the department to find out something about my return. I noticed that the size of the staff had been increased. They have put in computers. I was told it would be necessary to feed in a card and that it would not be possible to tell me how my account stood for the next two weeks. This is a measure of the efficiency we are getting, all at increased cost. Savings could be made in many of these directions and we would then be able to help the people who need help without increasing the tax load any further.

Subsidies, as one hon. member has pointed out—I believe it was the hon. member for Bruce (Mr. Whicher)—can hardly be termed a dirty word these days. I have no great desire to be part of an industry which is subsidized, and I believe the grain growing industry is one of the few that is standing on its own feet, but it should be remembered that we are subsidizing industry, mining, broadcasting—you name it, and we are subsidizing it. Why must subsidization be looked upon as a dirty word when it comes to western agriculture?

In conclusion, I reiterate that long term planning, while essential, is of no value at this time to a great many of these producers. If we are to hold the grain growing business together, emergency measures are required, and our farmers need cash right now.

[Translation]

**Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce):** Mr. Speaker I should like first to apologize for my absence this afternoon. I have, I think, an excellent excuse, since I met in Ottawa the Advisory Council of the department of Industry and Trade and Commerce and it seems to me that one of the basic requirements to assure the Council's efficient work is the attendance of the minister which is supposed to advise.

However, I have been informed about a number of arguments presented this afternoon in support of the motion proposed by the opposition. I do not pretend to answer adequately to the argument of the leader of the New Democratic party (Mr. Douglas) to the effect that the western farmer's income is inadequate, but since arguments concerning the marketing of Canadian wheat have been put forward, I think that I should make a few comments on that subject.

[Mr. Downey.]

To start with I will say that being rather well informed about the situation in the wheat industry and about the equally rather difficult situation faced by a number of western farmers, I would be the last one to make an attempt at minimizing the seriousness of the problem which confronts us at the moment.

● (9:30 p.m.)

[English]

The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) said this afternoon that the government was considering all aspects of this problem.

The farmers and the members of the house may be justified in feeling a little anxious about what the government will say on this subject, but I ask the house to believe that there are good reasons for giving proper consideration to all aspects.

It is easy for the opposition to shout "Give them cash, cash, cash". It is easy for the opposition to claim that we should have a two-price system. It is easy for the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) to say that we should make barter sales. It is easy to bring up in this debate all kinds of considerations having to do with the new Arts centre or the remission of tariffs for the automobile companies.

However, on the basis of the opposition's record I think the government should be rather cautious about the recommendations made by the opposition today. The least that can be said of them is that they should be properly assessed.

If one looks at the record, one is not edified by the suggestions made by the opposition in recent months. At the time the high moisture difficulties arose, I remember members of the opposition saying that the government was responsible or almost for the bad weather; that it had done nothing to cope with the tragedy of damp and tough grain. Their cries, still ring in my ears that "millions of bushels would be lost". As hon. members should know, this problem has been properly resolved.

**Mr. Mazankowski:** How would you know that millions of bushels have not been lost?

**Mr. Pepin:** Just state the contrary facts.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard):** Order. The remarks I made before apply to all members of the house.