

Suggested Payment to Western Farmers

Mr. Korchinski: Mr. Speaker, I am sure there will be other speakers from that party during the course of the day who will provide their own explanation.

Mr. Lang: Oh, come on.

Mr. Korchinski: I fully subscribe to the suggestion that the effect of past, present and future government policies has been to put western economy in a depressed position. Perhaps the government is somewhat embarrassed over the thought that provincial reaction will ferret out weaknesses in the government's plans and people will have an opportunity to discuss them at some length.

Let us consider the situation in respect of railway stations now scheduled for closure. I do not have any major cities in my riding, but I do have some communities of a fair size such as Preeceville and Carrot River with populations of between 2,500 and 3,000. They had substantial economies but as a result of government policies over the years the railway companies came to the conclusion these stations had to go. I see nothing on the horizon to indicate that the government will attempt to intercede on behalf of these communities. The remaining smaller communities in terms of population have all been abandoned so far as rail service is concerned. One can travel 50 or 60 miles without finding a railway station in my constituency. This is proof of what we are going through as a result of government policy or the lack thereof.

I wonder why the motion is drafted in terms relating simply to \$100 million, because I find this unacceptable. If we attempted to bring the western agricultural economy back to where it was and make it a viable area which might survive for some time, we would have to adopt a number of the policies suggested by the task force. There is a need for a greater injection of cash into that economy in one form or another. Only this morning at a committee meeting we were told of an amount of approximately \$250 million paid out under a plan. These are figures arrived at by the department. In these terms \$100 million is very unacceptable considering that the results of some of the government's policies mean a complete abandonment of government responsibility.

I have in mind the stockpiling of uranium, assistance to the gold mining industry and assistance to companies such as Ford of Canada. These are industries which came to the government and received assistance. I cannot comprehend why the government is today abandoning its responsibility toward the farming industry. This is obvious in view of the relatively small amount it is prepared to pay and the large amounts being spent on other programs. Some of these programs are not new but represent an abandonment of existing programs which had in fact been serving a purpose.

I suppose there does come a time with all legislation introduced into the House when amendments and changes are required, but I do not understand how the government can abandon a policy which has had the result of a cash infusion into the western economy. Cer-

[Mr. Speaker.]

tainly there has been a need for this infusion in the last three or four years, far more so than in the previous five or six years.

I remember that three years ago we had a severe crop failure as a result of frost damage. The grain was damp and farmers had to make additional expenditures to dry the grain. This meant that in addition to the lower returns because of low grades there was the added expense of drying and storing the grain. At that time we pleaded with the government for some measure of assistance to help us out of a very awkward situation. Moreover, we suddenly found that because of bungling here and there ships were waiting at ports but could not be loaded. There was not enough grain and some ships were turned away. This all resulted from government planning.

Last year was a 15-year low in terms of grain sales. That also added a depressing factor to the western economy. This year with a few grain sales one must think about the result. People are inclined to make comparisons and when they read about grain sales they think in terms of quotas. We have heard the minister refer to the question of quotas. He tells us we will have an eight-bushel quota. But when one thinks in terms of quotas today the eight-bushel quota on grain is equivalent to a five-bushel or six-bushel quota years ago. Today we have an entirely different basis on which to calculate the amount of grain.

• (12:50 p.m.)

We also went through the period of the Lift program. At that time the government immediately batted about—and this is a game the government plays—the suggestion that it would represent something like \$140 million. The government asked what the farmers were complaining about because they would get \$140 million. The net result after a fairly long period under the program is a pay-out of approximately \$53 million.

The government is now in the midst of introducing several other bills. It hopes, for example, to pass Bill C-244. There will no longer be an initial quota. It is interesting to note that there was a pay-out in 1968-69 of over \$100 million. That was an actual pay-out from the consolidated revenue fund. This year, as was amply pointed out by the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Lewis), when one calculates the result of the loss on storage it will amount to something like \$40 million.

It is rather confusing to talk about \$100 million in respect of this motion and the other legislation when in actual fact the amount of money to be paid out will be far less and probably in the order of \$40 million. In addition, for years to come we will have a further complication in respect of storage facilities. In the planning stages there have been discussions by the elevator companies concerning the possible elimination of certain storage facilities, because the government no longer feels that grain in storage in itself is an asset. The farmers in an effort to make as much money as possible or, if you like, save as much money as possible will also be seeking