

Government Orders

In short it is in every place that grain goes into or out of a terminal. It operated across the prairies and in certain parts of Ontario. It is right through the country.

It basically is paid for by producers. On a five-year running average over 90 per cent of its operating costs are paid for by producers. It is not the typical public servant in the sense that most public servants have their wages paid by the general taxpayer. In this case the Canadian Grain Commission does a specific job for a specific group of people, namely farmers, and its operating costs, its wages are almost entirely paid for by producers.

There have been suggestions in here that we have rich friends and those who can the least afford it are being attacked. In this case I want to point out what the Public Service Alliance has done for farmers.

I could make the case that the price is as low as it has ever been. Farmers are currently being paid prices that they received for a product 20 years ago. To put it into perspective, all of us would find considerable difficulty running our businesses or running our households with today's expenses on an income that we had 20 years ago. Bear in mind that most of the income that grain producers receive in this country comes from exports.

What we have is a situation in which the people who work for the Canadian Grain Commission really work for farmers. We have a case in which farmers are being very much set upon by some international circumstances beyond their control, and heaped on that is a situation in which the Public Service Alliance has taken its people off the grading and weighing function. This means that we have effectively shut down our exports. We have something like 40 boats either due or waiting for loading in Vancouver. It does not make any sense if what you are concerned about is the Public Service Alliance. As the NDP points out, we should be worried about the people who can least afford it, if in fact the Public Service Alliance does not care themselves about people who are suffering severe economic problems. We talk about people who are earning \$20,000 and \$25,000. Nobody likes to see people in that circumstance if they need more to live on, but let me tell you what the average income of a grain farmer this year is, by statistics, \$6,500.

If in fact the Public Service Alliance had chosen to keep about 200 people working, in my view, they could have kept a lot respect among farmers and they would have had a lot more clout with the general public if they had chosen not to take advantage of the situation that farmers find themselves in. That I find very, very regrettable.

Nobody likes strikes. We all lose in strikes. It is basically a lose, lose situation and nobody wins, but surely to goodness there should have been a way in which the point could have been made without taking advantage of people who are already in an extremely difficult circumstance. I find this rather sad especially when you think that over 90 per cent of the wages of a grain inspector comes from the very farmers that he is there to serve.

One of the reasons that we can continue to sell in international markets and do as well as we do is because of the quality of product that we produce. We have also been very competitive price wise, but there is another reason that we have been able to sell and that is our reputation as a reliable supplier. When we say we are going to deliver and when we schedule boats coming into a harbour to pick up grain the grain is there. This does nothing to help us with our reputation as a reliable supplier to the world of a high quality product.

When you have got 40 boats, either due or waiting at Vancouver, and you have got Thunder Bay shut down and you have got Prince Rupert shut down and you have got Montreal shut down, I fail to see how that helps anybody. It damages farmers. It hurts them at a time when they need every bit of possible sale that they can find, when we have a handful of people who can do this.

If the opposition and the NDP have some clout with the PSAC, it seems to me they could have made a lot of mileage if they could have talked to the Public Service Alliance and got about 200 people, I am told, to stay at work. You would have had grain flowing through ports. It would have made jobs for other people. Admittedly, even at very low prices, \$2 a bushel is not a lot of money for a bushel of grain, but at least the grain would have kept moving.

What I simply wanted to point out is that when the opposition gets up and talks about the fat cats and the fact that we are damaging people who can least afford to be damaged, that the Public Service Alliance is doing