

*Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act*

history of the wheat industry. I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that hon. members from the west may be more fully aware of the history of that industry than the minister is. When the minister states that the farmers this year are in a better position than last year, he is really making poor excuses which are not acceptable to the farmers of western Canada. The problems facing our western wheat farmers are every bit as bad this year as they were last year.

• (3:10 p.m.)

Let us look at the history of wheat farming and show this minister who aspires to be a history teacher just how the wheat farmer fared during 22 years when the Liberal party was in office. The policies of the Liberal administration in previous years led to a huge surplus of wheat piling up on the prairies. The Liberal government of those days did not attempt to sell that wheat, so the prospects facing farmers were bad. Many farmers wanted to move off their farms but could not do so because they lacked money. Our farmers didn't have a nickel.

What the Conservative government took office in 1957-58, they made the selling of western wheat their responsibility. I know many people wonder whose responsibility it is to sell our wheat. In the present administration the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) seems to have no jurisdiction over the wheat industry, but he said that the members of my party were in some way hurting the wheat growers. At the same time, he suggested we were afraid to attack the policies of the Wheat Board. That is not correct. We are not afraid to criticize Wheat Board policies and never have been. The Minister without Portfolio ought to read the remarks I made on August 6, 1960. Of course, it may be argued that if the Wheat Board does not prove capable of marketing wheat, we ought to get rid of the Wheat Board.

I am not suggesting that should be done. Nevertheless, we faced our responsibilities in 1960. At that time we had one minister who was responsible for wheat and not three ministers, as in the present government. Right now three ministers are each partially charged with responsibility for wheat matters. One may well ask how any government can solve problems in the field of wheat when the responsibilities in this area are divided between three ministers. Each minister in the present government tries to pass the buck to

his fellow ministers, the result being confusion and chaos. It was different under the Conservative government. That government realized the problem existed and did its best to solve it. The government of that day gave leadership when leadership was needed. Today there is no leadership, the result being that our wheat industry is faced with major problems.

The major difficulty today does not stem from lack of cash advances but from lack of markets. The minister ought to examine what happened in the past to see how the Conservative government solved the problem of wheat sales. We recognized that we had to increase markets for our wheat. It is true that the responsibility for selling wheat rests to some extent with the Wheat Board, but it also rests with the government which controls the Wheat Board. The combined efforts of government and the Wheat Board are required to sell wheat.

The problem facing the Conservative government was that not enough customers were looking for wheat. Then, when a large customer for wheat was found the cabinet decided to make credit available to that customer to facilitate the sale of our wheat. It may not be fair to give the credit for that sale to any one individual. It is enough to say that wheat was sold when our minister co-operated with the Wheat Board. Administrative difficulties were overcome, credit was made available to our customer, and wheat was sold.

Those who maintain that we were afraid to criticize the actions or policies of the Wheat Board ought to read *Hansard*. In particular, may I refer hon. members to remarks I am reported as having made at page 7692 of *Hansard* for August 6, 1960:

I am aware that under the Canadian Wheat Board Act the Canadian wheat board is given very wide powers pertaining to the delivery and merchandising of western wheat, oats and barley. I also realize that these powers were given to the wheat board by parliament. However, I feel that the present officials of the Canadian wheat board are not carrying out the policies of this government; and I wish to stress that point. They have also become too complacent in their attitude to their duties as members of that board. I might say here that the powers they have been given are too wide to be administered by bureaucrats.

I agree with that statement at the present time. I do not say the members of the wheat board have no ability; obviously they have. Yet, I cannot help harbouring the suspicion that bureaucrats are interested mainly in their pay cheques at the end of each month. That may be a harsh judgment but it is one