

Adjournment Debate

While every effort is made by the Canadian Wheat Board to increase the level of shipments from Churchill, it must be recognized that the board as seller cannot dictate to buyers the type of grain they are to buy nor the port from which delivery is to be made. Buyers purchase grain out of Churchill only to the extent that it is economical for them to do so, taking into account the cost of financing their inventories, ocean freight, and the cost of marine insurance.

Churchill is ideally located to service western European markets, the U.S.S.R. and eastern Europe. However, shipments out of Churchill during August, September and October arrive at destinations during or just after Europe has harvested its own crop. The storage facilities of these buyers are full or nearly full at that time, and there are extra costs to them in financing stocks which are not required for consumption for several months. As a result, these buyers have some difficulty in utilizing Churchill as fully as we would wish.

The trend toward increasingly large vessels in the grain trade is another factor which affects the level of shipments from Churchill. On the other hand, there are definite advantages to the Churchill route, including the shorter rail haul, and others my hon. friend mentioned this evening. The Canadian Wheat Board is fully aware of these advantages and is continuing, and will continue to move as much grain for shipment from Churchill as possible.

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS—REQUEST FOR FUNDS FOR
FRASER VALLEY FLOOD CONTROL PROGRAM

Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey-White Rock): Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, December 4, I pointed out to the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Chrétien) that the Fraser Valley was experiencing serious flooding, and areas were still in imminent danger.

Officials of the Department of the Environment have already informed me that inflation had completely eaten up the entire budget of the Fraser River Flood Control Program and that completion target dates had been put back to 1979-80. They mentioned also that the department had gone to the Treasury Board requesting further funding for this very important project. My question, therefore, to the President of the Treasury Board was as follows:

Will the minister give this high priority in view of the fact that a dike broke yesterday in the eastern part of Surrey and the South Westminister district is facing imminent flooding?

The answer was not only inadequate, in part it was also condescending and gratuitous. I am thankful he did allow that:

... when we are dealing with emergencies like that one, we take the necessary steps if we have to pay for our share of responsibilities.

That in itself is acceptable and encouraging. But then the minister went on to say:

I hope the hon. member will inform the leader of his party that he is pressing us to spend more money.

You bet I am! I make no apologies for that. When the needs that I have brought to the minister's attention cry for solution I will continue to press for funding.

[Mr. Goodale.]

The minister's answer brings into sharp focus the whole problem of the government's distorted priorities. I am talking about a community of 600 to 1,000 people who have endured a building freeze since 1968 because of poor drainage and sewage facilities. These people cannot get building permits to upgrade their homes because one or other of the levels of government has decided that money spent on proper drainage is not a good investment at this time. Meanwhile we get the latest model cash registers in the dining facilities here on Parliament Hill, and we get a \$36,000 carpet to cover the marble floor in the parliamentary dining room.

I am talking about a community where the water table rises and falls with the tide but the flood boxes and the pumps are not working properly. Meanwhile, not too many miles away, the CBC is planning to erect a French T.V. station. I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that the people in Bridgeview would gladly sacrifice that TV station if only they could get proper drainage.

I am speaking of a community where the ditches are up to five or six feet deep, they are open, and they have algae in them. They are increasingly filled with water because the higher ground to the south of Bridgeview has been subdivided, and now all that run-off is bestowed on the people of Bridgeview. These ditches surround the community playground, are adjacent to the school and community centre, and parallel all the streets on which the children walk to school. There does not seem to be enough money to drain these ditches, but there is plenty to pay for the thousands of square feet of unused government leased office space across Canada.

I am speaking of a community that really does have a community spirit—where neighbours talk to each other and help each other out—where the community hall is a busy place both for social events, recreation, and business meetings. These people have an esprit de corps and sense of kinship as few communities have today. In a day when most people are so busy they have isolated themselves from each other, we find a community where people stick together. Adversity, I suppose, has done this for them.

The joint federal-provincial program to provide dikes and drainage for areas like this is already far behind where it ought to be. The provincial government has asked the municipality of Surrey to buy up the right of way to build and improve dikes. The municipality has kept its part of the bargain and proceeded to do this. Now they are told that funding has been cut, partly due to lack of federal funds. And now the minister says, "You are asking me to spend more money." I most certainly am. But I am asking for more than that.

I am asking for a re-ordering of priorities. I am asking the President of the Treasury Board to remember that we are not talking about asking people to wait for luxuries. We are talking about people and very fundamental needs that they have—needs like safety from flooding or drowning, needs like hygiene, needs like the opportunity to build up their community so they can be proud of it. I repeat, Mr. Speaker, the municipality of Surrey is doing its part, the people are doing their part, and now they are waiting for the federal government to do its part.