

*Wheat Export Prices*

borrow your way out of debt, that in fact this is simply an advance loan on money already owed the farmer for the production sitting in storage on his farm. He will have to pay it back as soon as he is able to make deliveries. Thus, I suggest, the government should look further afield to some sort of effective solution to the present situation.

The hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Douglas), to his credit, put forward a number of proposals most of which were in line with those made by my colleagues and myself. But somehow he seemed to be a voice crying in the wilderness. He could not even work up any applause from the government benches while making his speech and placing his proposals before the government. To the credit of that hon. member, he was perfectly frank and honest when he answered a question from the hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin), and stated he had placed these proposals before the government but as yet had not received a favourable reply. What sort of response are these proposals receiving? This is an example of what is causing the frustration that people are now witnessing in western Canada.

● (10:50 p.m.)

A while ago the Prime Minister made reference to psychological alienation in western Canada. I suggest to him that some cold, hard cash in the hands of the western Canadian farmers at the present time in the form of income assistance would go a long way toward relieving the psychological alienation that he had noted over the last few months, and which I have no doubt he observed more closely last week.

One thing I noted about the speeches of both the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce was that neither dealt with the substance of the motion introduced by my leader and seconded by myself. Neither dealt with the immediate situation that had brought about the motion, namely the reduction in wheat prices in the United States during the past few days. Neither minister indicated to the house what action the Canadian Wheat Board or the Canadian government is taking in this regard. Neither minister would even indicate what was the response of the Canadian Wheat Board. I should like to know whether they have lowered their prices today.

We on this side have heard reports through the media that wheat prices are being lowered, yet, as I say, the ministers would not

[Mr. Burton.]

make a statement about what the Canadian Wheat Board had done in response to the United States announcement. It seems to me that if these ministers wanted to make a positive contribution to the debate, this is one matter on which they should have reported to the house.

In addition, neither minister dealt with the basic income situation in western Canada which is the consequence of a whole series of things that have happened over the past year, the latest development being one further example. Neither minister chose to deal with the income situation or to voice their own views about it, let alone indicate the attitude of the government. I do not expect them to have any policy proposals to offer tonight. After all, this would be an indication that they were bowing to and giving in to the opposition's demands. I suppose they have to stage these things in order to get the best possible advantage. But the farmers of western Canada are not going to put up with any more staging in regard to this particular matter; they demand action, and they demand it now.

The hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Gleave), in commenting on some of the incidents that took place during the Prime Minister's tour last week, quite rightly pointed out that the root cause of some of the demonstrations was the refusal of the Prime Minister prior to his visit to meet representatives of two major farm organizations the Saskatchewan Farmers Union and the National Farmers Union. When people who have the right to speak on behalf of the farmers of Saskatchewan and western Canada cannot get to talk to the Prime Minister, I suggest the reaction we witnessed in Regina, Saskatoon and other points last week has to result.

Let me, along with others, make it quite clear that I do not condone some of the events that took place last week. But if in fact we are going to have some sort of participatory democracy about which we have heard so much from the Prime Minister and members of the government during the past year and a half we will have to have both a change of attitude and a change of heart. We will have to take a different approach to problems such as these.

The background to the present situation extends over a number of years. I am not going to take the time of the house to deal with it in any detail. Mention has been made of a number of developments over the past three years, and since hon. members are