

Business of Supply

without Portfolio responsible for the operation of the Canadian Wheat Board and the Minister of Agriculture responsible for other aspects of the industry. Neither one, in my view, is capable of the action required to bring the system up to modern standards. One is beguiled by the idea of an efficient handling and storage system, and the other by the idea of trying to convince his party colleagues that he is really a Liberal. While the former, apparently, is at least trying to do something constructive, albeit in a very cold-blooded manner, neither appears to be at all concerned with solving the basic problem, which is selling wheat.

• (9:40 p.m.)

Speaking of efficiency, Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Minister without Portfolio whether he considers it efficient to have hundreds of thousands, if not millions of bushels of grain lying exposed to the elements and deteriorating while millions of bushels of storage space is lying idle at the Lakehead.

The stubborn refusal of the government to recognize the just claims which the agricultural community has upon the rest of the country is baffling. It is well established today that the west feels it has been disinherited by the government. This feeling is even more pronounced among western farmers who have waited in vain for a few crumbs from the government's table which has been laden with good things for Quebec and Ontario. As an example, one might point to the recent \$125 million write-off, in one day, in respect to the Expo Corporation which, by the way, equals three annual acreage payments made by the former Conservative administration to western farmers.

Canada's agricultural community has begun to realize it has been declared expendable by the government. Members of that community are becoming suspicious that they are being used cynically and callously by the government to carry the main burden of the fight against inflation. Many farmers now believe that the government is deliberately withholding action to stimulate the sale of grain, in order to cool-off the economy of the west and, eventually, the economy of the country as a whole. It is hard to find a more logical explanation. If there is one, I am sure the people of western Canada would like to be let in on the secret.

Much more could be said on this question, Mr. Speaker, but if the government's ears are
[Mr. Schumacher.]

wilfully closed to all advice and exhortation, it will profit us little to belabour the point. I would simply say in closing that the need for immediate and drastic action in regard to our whole process of handling and selling grain is clearly apparent. Suggestions have been made over and over again by many people knowledgeable in the field, and these are readily available. All that is required is government backing and leadership. The government has a clear responsibility to act, and a duty to act quickly and effectively to preserve an historic, valuable and necessary segment of Canada's social and economic life.

[Translation]

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, I thank all hon. members who have kindly helped the member from Bellechasse get an opportunity to say at least a few words.

The matter we are now examining is so important, in my opinion, that it should be approached in an unbiased way. When we were dealing with the problems of Canadian farmers, whether in western or in eastern Canada, I always felt that they should be given serious consideration in order that we could recommend solutions to the government.

Last spring, the Committee on Agriculture travelled throughout Canada primarily for the purpose of examining the important problems of western farmers and in order to determine whether the representations of the members for those regions were really justified. I deeply regret that the report of the committee has not yet been put before the House for lack of some highly important briefs as yet not submitted, although the solutions they offer are likely to correct the situation to a certain extent.

I am not a feed grain producer, but I must say that in my constituency large quantities of western grain are used. Co-operative milling plants import more than two million bushels of feed grain a year.

Were the movement of grain from western to eastern Canada made by ship—in accordance with the proposals of certain studies which have been made—thousands of dollars could be saved.

Mr. Speaker, I notice that it is 9.45. I would not wish to delay the question unduly. Perhaps we will have another opportunity to