

Business of Supply

western Canada, it is up to the government to bridge the gap between now and the time such an adjustment takes place. This is more than a moral obligation, it is an economic necessity because it will cost a great deal more to correct this impending disaster than it will to prevent it.

● (4:00 p.m.)

This is the main point I want to make to the government this afternoon. The space at the Lakehead or some place else can be filled, because it is merely a matter of moving cars. But what about the over-all policy with regard to storage? What is to be the real policy and what are to be the real decisions in respect of how much grain we will keep in storage? Is there to be a real decision as to where we will keep it in storage and how much we will be ready to pay to keep it in storage? These decisions have not been made; they have been avoided for the last number of years. The farmer in western Canada will accept answers if they are given to him. He will live with a policy if it is established. But he cannot live when there is no policy and when he does not know where he is going. He cannot, and neither can the economy of the nation or the economy of a part of a nation, live under circumstances in which the people do not know where they are going. If they do not know where they are going, they surely cannot plan how to get there.

It is answers of this type that are being awaited. The Canada Grains Council has been sitting for a year—or standing or sleeping, we do not know which. I hear some reports in Saskatoon that people have said some nice things about it. Possibly we may get some answers. Since my time is expiring, I should like to move the following amendment, seconded by the hon. member for Regina East (Mr. Burton):

That the motion be amended by changing the period at the end thereof to a comma, and by adding thereafter the following words: "and that this House urges the government to give immediate consideration to the taking of steps to deal with the prairie farm crisis by: 1. Providing a deficiency payment for the 1968-69 crop year sufficient to assure the farmer a final return equivalent to the \$1.95½ minimum price established under the International Grains Arrangement, and 2. Appointing a Transport Controller to co-ordinate the movement of all western grains."

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Possibly I might be given an opportunity to reflect on the amendment. I have just one or two initial reservations about it. First, I should like to discuss these with Mr. Speaker. I do

not wish to delay the House and shall make a pronouncement on the amendment in a few minutes.

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister without Portfolio): Mr. Speaker, the motion before the House of the hon. member for Mackenzie (Mr. Korchinski) refers in several respects to the use of storage facilities, the proper amount of storage facilities for the future and the place at which they should be. It was to this aspect the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Gleave) referred just before proposing his amendment.

I should like to say a few words about the issue which seems to have caught the interest of hon. members in respect of the storage question. The specific issue of course relates to the storage situation at Thunder Bay where, quite in the usual fashion, the amount of grain in storage at the close of navigation drops to a fairly low point. The drop this year took place very rapidly at the end of the period of navigation because of the flow of sales at that particular time and the requirement to move grain eastward from the Lakehead in those last days of navigation.

I emphasized to hon. members before, and should like to do so again, that this decline to a low point in storage at Lakehead facilities is a perfectly natural, normal and efficient thing to have happened. The question that is really fundamental here has to do with the most effective and efficient use of the grain handling and storage system. The Lakehead must be filled to capacity at the time of the opening of navigation whenever heavy sales are in prospect. This is the case this year, so it is important that we attempt to ensure that the Lakehead will be full at that time.

Normally, during the course of the navigation season, stored grain is used to supplement the additional inputs of grain throughout the period when meeting the demand for export, and at the end of the period the storage capacity is not nearly all used but is at a rather low point. There is ahead, of course, the period when navigation is closed and no grain is moving out of the Lakehead. Accordingly the storage space can gradually be filled again in anticipation of the navigation season.

The issue which has been put before this House from time to time is the speed at which that space should be filled. The interest of the farmer in a general way, of course, is to see that there is enough there to meet sales at the time navigation opens. I have given