

Grain Shipments

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Penner): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but the time allotted to him for this debate has now expired. The hon. member for Carleton-Charlotte (Mr. McCain).

Mr. Fred McCain (Carleton-Charlotte): Mr. Speaker, the fact that the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Chrétien) could announce in the House tonight in a rather hilarious way that a settlement may have been reached in connection with the problems which have been plaguing the grain industry does not in any way change the relevance of this motion tonight. It does not preclude an emergency debate on a point of national interest now or at any future time in this House.

It has been my privilege to have been in a house of government for a little more than 20 years of my life, and as yet I have never seen the treasury benches abandoned in total as the Liberal government has abandoned its benches tonight.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. McCain: I have never seen a group of people who cared so little for the public as the treasury benches of the Liberal government in 1975. They are a disgrace to the democratic system by any measurement which might be applied, and hon. members opposite, who sit there like a bunch of idle servants, should certainly tell them where they stand tomorrow. They have abused the very principles which are the responsibility of elected democratic representatives, particularly those who are willing to assume by appointment the responsibility for a cabinet position.

Let us consider the movement of grain in the Dominion of Canada in the last three years. Did hon. members opposite know that in the first quarter of 1972 we did not move as much grain as we did in the first quarter of 1971? Did they know that in the second quarter of 1972 we did not move as much grain as we did in the first quarter of 1971? Did they know that in the third quarter of 1972 we moved 15 million bushels less than in the third quarter of 1971? I could go on. In the fourth quarter of 1972 we did pretty well. There was good shipment. But let us go back again to 1973. The market was picking up, and there was a demand. We find that in the first quarter of 1973 we did not ship as much as we did in the first quarter of 1971. In the second quarter of 1973 we did not ship as much as we did in 1971. In the third quarter of 1973 we did not do as well as well as we did in 1971. The first three quarters of 1974 were the worst of all.

Any Liberal member who has been responsible enough to get himself elected to the House of Commons must share some of the responsibility, whether he sits on the backbenches or the frontbenches, for a deplorable state of transportation, labour problems, and disorganization which this government has perpetrated in the name of a majority or a minority government.

An hon. Member: What about the just society?

Mr. McCain: The just society has deteriorated to the disordered society. I submit that the government for over three years has been playing the game of economic brink-

[Mr. Malone.]

manship, and playing it quite successfully while all of Canada suffers.

One speaker had the temerity today to say that there would be just a little area affected and just a few people. There is a Liberal member to the right of the Chair who represents part of an agricultural area, and I represent another part of the same area. There are roughly 60,000 people there. If agriculture were tied up in that little community in New Brunswick as western agriculture has been tied up in part or in full for three years, 80 per cent of those people would find themselves with a deteriorating standard of living. Directly or indirectly 80 per cent of those 60,000 people living in the potato belt of New Brunswick are dependent, in full or in part, upon the agricultural industry. That is how people are affected, and that is how the public interest and the national interest has been neglected.

I am surprised that the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. MacFarlane), who has spent so much time in New Brunswick, is so jovial. If he had any concern for people at all he would be less than happy about the fact that some 48,000 could have their lives driven downhill by the kind of irresponsible neglectful government which we have been witnessing.

We have been told that we are not dealing with very much money and that we are talking in terms of 1.4 per cent of the budget. Those were the remarks of the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Chrétien) tonight. Mr. Speaker, 1.4 per cent of the Treasury Board budget is \$375 million to \$390 million of the taxpayers' money. That was a big joke to the minister but it is not a joke to the taxpayer.

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Let us see what this has done to the Atlantic area. People from the Atlantic provinces made representations before the Standing Committee on Agriculture and were assured that there would not be another grain emergency in the east; that grain would be stored there. Mr. Speaker, the amount that would have been stored in the east for emergency purposes might have lasted two weeks. The grain was stored in Halifax and then the rules were changed. This grain was supposed to be available to feeders in the Atlantic area at competitive prices; but in the present emergency, when we inquired about drawing from the storage in Halifax we found that we could only borrow from the Wheat Board. The grain has to be replaced with the same grade that has been withdrawn and the borrower has to pay the extra freight to get it to his farm. I submit that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) and all those who are associated with the selling and moving of grain have acted in a traitorous way in respect of the promises made to that area in case of another crisis in grain.

As of today, the maritime express service is 45 cars behind in New Brunswick and hour by hour the number is increasing. Hon. members opposite may say this is of no consequence to Canada as a whole. Maybe the Atlantic area does not count, but I say to the hon. member who left the Atlantic area that we have been abandoned by the government which he now supports. We should be able to look for a little help to a man as familiar with the requirements of the Atlantic area as he should be.