

Grain

one shipowner have amounted to \$32,000. You cannot say this is efficient handling of the problem in this day and age when efficiency is the guide to what we do.

An hon. Member: But not brevity.

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, someone talks about brevity. My constituents sent me and other western members to Ottawa to act on their behalf. We came here to urge and drive the government to do those things which are necessary. We have tried to get some action from a government that is confronted with a serious problem that affects our constituencies and in fact the whole of the country. Brevity is in many cases nothing more than laziness. We cannot adopt a lazy attitude with regard to an important problem such as this.

Mr. Woolliams: Brevity is the soul of wit.

Mr. Horner: I close by saying that this problem demands more attention and action than the government has given it in the past. I hope that after this debate the government will be inspired to greater heights, for the benefit of the western Canadian farmer.

Mr. Mark Smerchanski (Provencher): Mr. Speaker, it is rather difficult to follow in the footsteps of the hon. member who has just finished making his speech, because I really wonder whether he really believes what he says. The hon. member takes the position that the present situation has a rather drastic effect upon our economy. The facts of the matter are that the movement of grain into the port of Vancouver is at the present time higher than it has been at any time in the past.

Mr. Horner: Tell the farmers that.

Mr. Smerchanski: As the minister has said, the reason the trainloads of grain are unable to be unloaded is the very severe winter conditions in Vancouver. These winter conditions have been the worst in 20 years.

An hon. Member: In Edmonton.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Horner: You said Vancouver; someone said Edmonton.

Mr. Smerchanski: After I have had my say, you can speak. I am not going to blow as hard as you, but I will blow on the facts. Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that there are trainloads of wheat backed up into the sidings at Revelstoke, British Columbia, and

a good percentage of the western Alberta towns. The reason is that in the movement of wet and damp grain there is a freezing problem and the unloading capacity at the terminal is reduced to approximately 20 per cent of the normal.

Mr. McIntosh: Is this something new?

Mr. Smerchanski: The reason is the unfortunate weather conditions in western Canada last fall. This was an act of God and is not the fault of any government.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Smerchanski: By way of clarification for those hon. members who have sat in this house for many years, the Canadian government does not sell grain and I do not think any politician should interpret it in any other way.

● (10:00 p.m.)

I would like to quote from an article entitled "The Function of the Wheat Board" which was prepared by Mr. R. C. Brown of the United Grain Growers of Winnipeg and presented to a seminar in Brandon, Manitoba, dated December 13, 1968. The Wheat Board—and this is rather interesting—has been incorporated with the object of marketing in an orderly manner for inter provincial and export trade grain grown in Canada. It possesses the following powers. It has the right to buy, take delivery of, store, transfer, sell ship or otherwise dispose of grain. Under the same powers that it has vested in it it has the right to enter into contracts or agreements for the purchase, sale, handling, storage, transportation, disposition or insurance of grain.

I am a newcomer to the House of Commons but I am from western Canada. When I listened to the many statements from the Opposition that it is the responsibility of the government to sell wheat rather than that of the Canadian Wheat Board, I could not agree for this is not in accordance with the facts.

Mr. Horner: You are splitting hairs.

Mr. Smerchanski: These are the hairs that lost you the election on June 25. When the Opposition takes the position that their former minister of agriculture sold the grain and that their former administrators were able, by personal effort, to go out to China and Russia and make these sales on a personal basis, that also is not in accordance with the facts.