

Grain

The minister also noted that there had been a stronger demand for grain than was anticipated earlier this fall, and I do not quarrel with that statement either. I understand new export orders came in early in December which were additional to the orders previously expected. The Wheat Board decided to follow a policy of optimizing its sales and undertook to work out the transportation problems later.

So far as I am concerned, I give the Wheat Board credit for taking that action. I have no doubt that the Wheat Board followed up its decision by taking all the necessary steps, within its area of authority, to see that deliveries were made to the purchasers of grain. But the fact is that these steps were inadequate.

The minister seemed to question what exactly was his function. Is it his function to operate the wheat marketing system and to instruct all the officials involved as to what they are to do? I would say that that is not his function. The minister noted that it is his function to support that organization, and I agree fully with that statement. I urge him to fulfil that function by appointing a grain controller or transport controller to deal with the current problems facing us, and with other problems which I predict will arise over the next few months.

When we look at all the difficulties outlined by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Order. I understand the minister wishes to ask a question.

Mr. Pepin: May I ask the hon. member what the minister is supposed to do with the advice that he gets?

Mr. Burton: I suggest that he has to sort through the various suggestions made to him and reach a decision. The particular course of action that I recommend at the present time is the appointment of a grain controller to co-ordinate all aspects of grain marketing.

Mr. Pepin: That is one opinion.

Mr. Burton: That is one opinion and I recommend it to the minister. I think it has received a wide measure of support tonight from all sides of the house. I heard the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Douglas) suggest that it would be very useful to have a transport controller, and I commend him for putting that suggestion before the minister. This

[Mr. Burton.]

is the course of action that is required. What is needed is co-ordination, direction, and an attempt to achieve a proper working together of all elements and sectors of our grain handling industry. This is the sort of support the minister should give the Wheat Board to help it do the job we all want to see it do, and which it has been doing its level best to do. Lack of government action has resulted in despondency and confusion among western farmers. That has been aggravated by the fact that the government has so often said in this house, "Everything is fine; there is no problem. We have everything in hand and there is nothing to worry about." The farmers of course have seen that is not so. Lack of adequate government direction has resulted in the farmers of western Canada fearing for the long term future of their industry.

Tonight, we must consider what must be done to help our farmers. As I have already said, for heaven sake let us appoint a controller of grain and a controller of transportation to make sure our grain is marketed properly. Second, and this point arises from my first point, let us make sure that enough No. 2 wheat arrives in Vancouver, but not too much. In its panic reaction to existing circumstances the government may dump too much No. 2 wheat from western Canada into Vancouver, attempting to make sure that overseas commitments are met. The result may be that we will have too much No. 2 wheat in Vancouver and not enough of the other grades.

Third, I suggest that compensation through the Canadian Wheat Board should be made for demurrage and other special costs which have arisen this year, in part because of lack of government policy and direction during the past few months. Fourth, we ought to provide some form of direct financial assistance to farmers in drying grain. That has already been discussed in the house. Some of us do not feel that the government's proposal to pay \$600 more in cash advances to farmers will help our farmers. Many of them feel that, with conditions as they are, they are unlikely to repay that advance by July 31 next. We must give direct financial assistance to farmers in order to help dry their grain. That will be in the national interest. Fifth, we ought to embark on a long range program to help elevator companies instal drying equipment. Recently members of the Saskatchewan legislature, including the leader of the opposition, Mr. W. S. Lloyd, made a special trip to North Dakota to see how grain was being dried