

going to get the seed, and what is it going to cost them?

I think members of the government were hasty. I have never been able to give them credit for being hasty previously but certainly they have been hasty on this occasion, thinking that this program will be the solution to the problems of western Canada.

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, it really should not have been necessary to have this debate tonight, and I know all of us regret the fact that the *Hansard* reporters, the protective staff and others have to stay on extra hours. If I may, I would suggest it might be a good idea were Mr. Speaker to investigate the possibility of docking the pay of the members who are not here and using it as overtime payment for the staff. We might thereafter have a warmer reception for a debate at this hour of the night.

Mr. Woolliams: Don't get apologetic.

Mr. Benjamin: We don't apologize for moving this emergency debate. I was saying it should not have been necessary to hold it, because if the minister and the government really thought this program was so good, if they were really anxious to have farmers, Members of Parliament and the public at large understand it and co-operate, and were anxious to have the farmers participate in it, they would have arranged a day's debate on government time in order to give a full explanation of the program and to answer the myriad questions that are in the minds of farmers and are being phoned to us almost on the hour every hour.

They were not all that interested, Mr. Speaker, and as referred to earlier this evening, the interest shown by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau)—in fact the discourtesy shown by him—this evening indicates the seriousness with which the government views this problem and how it feels it should be explained to the public.

Farmers have shown in the past that they can put up with almost everything. In the past year or two the conditions I have seen on the Prairies remind me of the agricultural depression in 1938. We had grasshoppers, we had Russian thistles—

Mr. Woolliams: And CCF!

Mr. Benjamin:—gophers and dust storms and Liberals, so the farmers over the years have learned to put up with almost anything.

Wheat Acreage Reduction

The saying started then, "Liberal times are hard times" and I have never heard it repeated so often as it was last year.

After two years of requests and pressure from every possible farm organization and every part of Canada, after the issues about agriculture—wheat, cream, milk, corn; you name it—being raised in this House countless times, the minister and the government finally came forward and recognized a farm cash shortage. That is putting it mildly, Mr. Speaker, but at least they finally admitted it, and their solution is acreage payments.

In my opinion and in the opinion of many people the program is entirely inadequate. It is a cheapskate way for the Liberals to try to get out from under this problem. This, in my opinion, is their first objective, to get the farmers to bail them out of the situation they are in with wheat and the inventories we have on hand. Secondly, it still makes the Canadian farmers compete against the treasuries of other nations. Among those who protest so much about the Canadian Wheat Board it is remarkable how many are Liberals and Tories, or are concerned in the agricultural business. These people and the boys in the Winnipeg grain exchange talk about the inadequacies of the Wheat Board and about salesmanship as if just anybody could sell wheat.

Mr. Speaker, the Wheat Board is not perfect and nobody has ever pretended that it is, least of all the members of the Wheat Board. But let us call it the way it is. The Wheat Board has not been, nor will it in the future under the Liberals be able to operate any better than the government's policy will allow. It has been continually handicapped by national government policies which prevent it—

Mr. Lang: How?

Mr. Benjamin:—from carrying on massive and successful sales efforts outside Canada. The minister asks how. The minister expects the Canadian Wheat Board to sell wheat in competition with the subsidized grains of other exporting nations, he expects the Prairie farmers to compete with those prices and expects the costs of that competition to come out of the pockets of our farmers. He wants to know how. Here is another quote from the report of Mr. S. C. Hudson, prepared for the Economic Council of Canada, stating some of the ways in which the Wheat Board is handicuffed. At page 290 Mr. Hudson states: