

amounting to \$100,000. These assets are worth \$100,000 only if they can be realized, and if they can produce a financial return. The \$100,000 assets that a farmer might have are, first of all, assets of which he cannot dispose. No one would buy a \$100,000 farm if he cannot sell the wheat produced by that farm, or if, when he does sell the wheat, it is sold at a price that is below the cost of production.

I want to make it perfectly clear that the prairie farmers are not asking the government for charity. They are not asking for handouts. It is all very well for the Prime Minister to talk about farmers who are on uneconomic farms, those farmers who cannot make a living. This is a separate problem, a problem that has to be dealt with, but we are talking here about those farmers who are efficient, those who have been productive. In fact they have been so productive that at the present time there are close to one billion bushels of grain in Canada, and by the time this year's crop is taken off the farms this amount will probably rise to 1.5 billion bushels.

● (3:10 p.m.)

These are not people who need charity. These are people who are facing bankruptcy and whose assets are useful only if they can obtain a price for their product that will enable them to meet their costs of production and give them a reasonable return on invested capital. They must sell the produce of their farms.

I think this parliament must be seized of the problems facing prairie farmers. Our aid should not be in handouts but in actions that will salvage the industry. After all, a short time ago hon. gentlemen opposite gave about \$80 million to two automobile companies. Ford Motor Company of Canada was given \$75 million, and the Chrysler people got \$5 million. Neither of these concerns was bankrupt; neither could be described as poor. The government gave this money because it thought it necessary to keep these companies in business.

**Mr. Pepin:** Mr. Speaker, that question was answered in committee to the satisfaction of the committee and it is unfair for the hon. member to repeat his accusations at this time.

**Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands):** The matter may have been answered to the government's satisfaction and to the satisfaction of Liberal committee members, but it was not answered to the satisfaction of

other committee members, as I know very well.

**Mr. Broadbent:** On a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker, I wish to reply to the minister's suggestion that members of the committee were satisfied with the answer. I was a member of the committee and I was not satisfied with the government's answer.

**Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands):** I do not wish to introduce an irrelevant issue into this debate. My point is that the Prime Minister and his colleagues did not wait until the automobile companies were bankrupt. They gave going concerns large government handouts. I am saying that while the wheat economy is still solvent, before farmers go bankrupt and before hundreds of them have to abandon their farms, the government must act.

I have had a steady stream of letters from farmers who are having their machinery repossessed. One Manitoba farmer wrote saying that he had \$64,000 worth of machinery repossessed and that he had a 70 per cent equity in that machinery. How can he take a crop off if his machinery has been repossessed? I have had letters from representatives of implement companies, car and truck salesmen, and merchants across the prairies. All tell the same story of declining sales volume and declining business activity. This is not a matter of handing out charity to some poor farmers. We are now talking about salvaging the wheat economy as a viable part of the Canadian economy. That is what we are talking about.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands):** This great wheat surplus is not the farmers' fault, Mr. Speaker. Surely the farmers are not to be blamed or penalized for being so efficient and productive. In the last 20 years the productivity per farm worker has tripled, and no other industry in Canada can claim that record. By virtue of modern technology, ingenuity, and much hard work our farmers have been able to produce this tremendous quantity of high quality wheat. They were encouraged to do so, being told repeatedly by government spokesmen, "Grow the wheat and we will sell it."

Now it is a different story. Now the government is beginning to say, "We have too much wheat; we do not know what to do with the quantity we have; our farmers are just too