

Loss to Canada of World Wheat Market

were. Let me give the hon. gentlemen opposite the benefit of the doubt and assume that the farmers will get, not a five bushel quota but a six bushel quota. This means that a farmer with a section of land and 500 acres sown to wheat will be able to sell 3,000 bushels of that wheat. In such circumstances how can the farmers operate and the economy remain stable? Let me remind the government that when the farmers do not prosper the economy of the country suffers. Nothing is more important to the economy of Canada than western and eastern Canadian agriculture.

What bothers me today, Mr. Speaker, is that for the last ten years the farmers of western Canada have been accustomed to selling their wheat. The Conservatives came to power in 1957, and in that year and the following year went to work with the Canadian Wheat Board to find markets for our wheat. We sold as much wheat as the farmers could grow. When our Liberal friends came into office they inherited the markets we had established, but these are now dwindling and nothing is being done to improve the situation.

I suggest it is the duty tonight of the Minister of Trade and Commerce to tell this house and the farmers of Canada that in conjunction with the Canadian Wheat Board officials the government will seek out markets for our grain. Ever since parliament resumed we have been discussing the international wheat agreement and the steps that should be taken by the government, but all we have had is evasive answers. I speak tonight on behalf of the farmers of western Canada and I plead with the government—if it is possible to plead with them—to do something to remedy the drastic situation we are facing as a result of the loss of Canadian wheat markets.

The farmers of western Canada see their wheat lying piled upon the ground. They have expensive machinery to buy, which increases in cost every year. That new machinery is being bought to replace the old, in the expectation that the farmers will be able to sell the wheat they produce. However, as I have said before, I predict that our farmers will be given only a five or perhaps a six bushel quota. The result will be that the farmers of western Canada will be placed in a very difficult situation, as will the businessmen.

I observe the Minister of Agriculture and the minister of northern affairs having a conference, and I hope that one of them is

[Mr. Smallwood.]

going to reply. Perhaps the minister of northern affairs can get the Secretary of State (Miss LaMarsh) to come into the house and reply. I have tried to be reasonable and I am pleading tonight that the government do something for our farmers. It is not enough for the government to say that the Russians are going to buy more wheat, that somebody will come along and we can let it pile up.

I should like to close by asking somebody on the front benches—I do not want a Liberal backbencher to stand up and make a political speech—to tell the western farmers what representations were made to the United States government before they started to fire sale their wheat. The farmers want to know what action the minister is prepared to take about equalizing the quotas which are so discriminatory to the farmers of Alberta and Manitoba.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we should like to know what the government is going to do to promote further sales of wheat. If they have nothing in mind, then let them come clean; let some member of the front bench tell the house that the Liberals, as in previous years, have failed, that they cannot handle Canadian wheat, that they cannot sell it and that it will pile up. Let them tell the western farmers not to expect more than a five or six bushel quota per acre this coming year, so that the farmers can govern themselves accordingly. That is only being fair to the farmers and businessmen of this country. As I have said, they were able to sell their wheat when the Conservative government was in office, and they now want to know where they stand. They do not want to overbuy in the matter of equipment and to find chaos across the country.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Minister of Agriculture will soon tell us when we can expect the old Liberal election promise of \$2 wheat to come to fruition.

Mr. George Muir (Lisgar): Mr. Speaker, I rise to take part in this debate, if only briefly, in view of the very serious situation faced by our farmers in marketing their grain, as so ably demonstrated by the hon. member for Battle River-Camrose (Mr. Smallwood). As the hon. member mentioned, an expected over-all delivery quota of six bushels an acre means that at the end of the crop year there will still be a considerable amount of grain being stored on the farms. Under the circumstances I suggest the government consider revising the cash advance legislation in order to make more money available to the