

Olson) informed the house that the situation was well in hand with regard to grain drying. Later, the next day, the Minister of Agriculture backtracked somewhat in dealing with the same problem.

In the past couple of weeks there have been further statements with regard to the inadequacy of box cars for the movement of grain. This is a matter in respect of which it has been difficult to obtain some of the facts. However, I think the house should be aware of the protest by the Saskatchewan Federation of Agriculture after a meeting with provincial government officials and representatives of other farm organizations. As I understand it, they sent a telegram to the Minister of Agriculture dealing with this situation and protesting the viewpoint that the situation is well in hand. I should like to quote from the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool farm news broadcast for November 12, 1968:

The committee strongly states that this is not the case. According to the information received from the northern and eastern parts of the province, farmers believe that there will be little or no problem in getting rid of the damp grain. Publicity in recent weeks relating to the availability of box cars and the availability of grain drying facilities and storage at terminals has helped them to arrive at this conclusion.

However, we wish to stress that, contrary to popular belief, both the inland and port terminals are drying insignificant amounts of grain at the present time. We ask that prompt action be taken by all authorities involved to put more pressure on railway companies to spot cars and speed up the eventual movement of grain to the terminals. The matter is urgent. Ports will close to shipping in a few weeks and as much damp grain as possible must be moved before then.

As reported in the *Regina Leader-Post* of November 19, 1968 the director of the Saskatchewan government agricultural representative branch stated:

Nearly 100 million bushels of damp wheat will have to be dried on the prairies this year.

He went on to state as quoted in this article:

An estimated 160,000,000 bushels had been harvested above the 17 per cent moisture content level, but drying facilities at all terminal elevators would be able to handle only 62,000,000 bushels for conditioning before the end of April, leaving 98,000,000 bushels to be dried elsewhere, he said.

But the total extent of the problem is even greater when the amounts of very tough wheat, which also need drying, are taken into consideration.

Mr. Boyes estimated that 170,000,000 bushels will have to be dried at some place other than the terminals.

In Saskatchewan there are an estimated 170,000,000 bushels of damp or very tough wheat as well as 12,000,000 bushels of damp oats.

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"It doesn't look like we will come anywhere close to handling the damp grain without farm drying," he said.

At its recent convention the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool passed a resolution which stated as follows:

That, in view of the impending disastrous economic situation facing farmers with damp, low-grade grain that could go out of condition, be it resolved that a program of financial assistance by the governments be sought, to assist producers in drying or caring for these stocks.

I would suggest that other than making use of already existing facilities which would have been used under any normal circumstances the government has not taken any extra special efforts, at least to the knowledge of members of this house and to the knowledge of the public, to deal with the situation which faces those on the prairie provinces.

Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I have only three minutes, therefore it is going to take some special effort to try to answer all of the problems and questions which have been raised by the hon. member for Regina East (Mr. Burton).

First of all, I want to say categorically that we do not accept his assertion that the government has not taken any action. We do not accept his assertion that the government has been something less than frank in giving members of this house information in respect of this matter, in spite of his recital of all the questions which have been asked during the period when this harvest was coming in. For his information there will be a meeting tomorrow called by the Canadian Wheat Board, because of the serious implications of the tough and damp grain situation as it now exists in all sectors of the Canadian economy. More specifically, the western producers will be called in because it is essential that everyone affected by tough and damp grain be fully aware of the magnitude of the problems and the most effective and expeditious way of dealing with them throughout the ensuing months.

We have a report from the Saskatchewan department of agriculture which made a survey several days or, indeed, several weeks ago which indicates there are something in excess of 800 on-farm dryers, and the number is going up every day. This government has announced its intention to provide for accelerated depreciation in respect of on-farm dryers, but it requires action on the part of this house in passing the budget resolutions