

*Supply—Agriculture*

you have large quantities of grain to dry, the cost is very high indeed. It runs anywhere from 10 cents to 20 cents a bushel. One can imagine the exorbitant cost involved in this operation. The farmers are short of cash at the present time because they have vast amounts of unsold grain on their farms owing to the lack of markets. There is no ready cash coming into their hands.

We in the opposition pressed the government to double the amount of cash advances on farm stored grain, and the government acceded to our request. But the \$3,000 to \$6,000 involved was used up immediately in the normal operations of the farm, to pay fuel bills, tax bills, repairs and in the general upkeep of the family farm. This money was used, as I say, to cover the cost of current operations. So the farmer has now spent that money and is not able to sell his grain until it is dried. In addition he is caught in a cost-price squeeze the like of which he has never experienced. I suggested through questions to the minister that we should consider the matter of acreage payments. This was done in past years to meet similar emergencies. I therefore believed mine was a practical suggestion.

Another factor in connection with this problem is providing information on how to operate a dryer. Interestingly enough, this is a matter of great concern because many farmers have never had experience in operating these machines. As I understand it, before he can market grain that has been dried at the farm, the farmer has to give an affidavit to the grain elevator company where he is going to dispose of his grain, setting out all particulars with regard to his drying operation. A sample of the farmer's grain is sent to the Board of Grain Commissioners' offices in Winnipeg. They test it, and if it does not meet the required standard it is rejected and will be accepted only as feed. The reason is that apparently in the drying process, if the temperature is not properly regulated the gluten content of the grain is impaired and as a result the flour is not of the right quality for baking. This is another serious situation with which our farmers are faced, and something has to be done about it.

It is my right to complain about the ineptitude of the government and its lack of policy in meeting this emergency. I believe it is my duty to make some constructive suggestions. What are those suggestions? First, I suggest that the government accelerate markets wherever possible to relieve the congestion of

[Mr. Southam.]

grain. I mentioned the fact that this congestion developed over the last year or two owing to the lapsing of the wheat agreement. This is something of which we have to take very serious cognizance in consultation with the other countries of the world which are also involved with the wheat agreement to ensure that the agreement works effectively and in the interest not only of the exporting but of the importing nations.

● (5:30 p.m.)

Second, we have to provide cash assistance to farmers through acreage payments or other emergency subsidies such as P.F.R.A. and P.F.A.A. This has been done previously. I can cite the instance back in 1959 when farmers' crops were under the snow. The government of that time, headed by the right hon. member for Prince Albert, came up with policies which provided acreage payments and special assistance to farmers in order to tide them over the difficult situation. Now we are faced with an even more serious situation because of the vast amounts of wet grain now piled up in western Canada. When I refer to wet grain I think something has been overlooked and should be emphasized again, although I believe the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar referred to it. We have been talking about wheat, but there is also a multi-million bushel pile-up of other grains such as feed grains, oats, barley, flax and so on. References have been made to the 380 million bushels of wet wheat. If we considered all grains I think the total figure would be closer to one billion bushels. This indicates the immensity of the problem and one cannot overemphasize what the farmer is up against.

I hope that as this debate proceeds and the press covers it as well as the further statements made by Mr. McNamara and the minister himself, our farmers will realize they will have to get to work immediately and not leave it for another ten days or two weeks but avail themselves of every opportunity to start drying their grain or we will be faced with a loss of multi-millions of bushels of grain through rot, mould, etc. In terms of dollars and cents, the loss figure would be enormous.

Besides this assistance I think that emergency freight assistance to move dryers into position should be reinstated similar to the action that was taken not only back in the hungry 30's but in 1961 at the time of the great drought in western Canada. At that time legislation was brought in by a special