

*Supply—Agriculture*

It also appears from the November 7 edition that the farmers are joining together to take the crop off the farms and that 90 per cent of the crop has been combined. This article goes on to say that most of the grain is tough or damp, and indicates that the farmers are not happy about the high moisture level. An article that appeared in the November 14 issue is headed: "All Is Not Well With The Grain Crop". Then it goes on to indicate that grain drying is in full swing. Another heading in the November 21 issue reads: "Poor Condition Of Grain Is Causing Terminal Slowdown".

I have made reference to these reports, Mr. Chairman, in order to indicate that the present situation has not been a sudden development, that it has been building up in the prairie provinces for over a month and a half. Hon. members have continually asked the government what action it proposes to take, whether it is prepared to meet the situation and to take steps to meet the calamity that is being faced in western Canada. Sometimes spokesmen for the government have said that yes, information is going out on grain drying, yes, we are waiting to see what the developments are.

We on this side of the house, have twice asked for a debate on this matter. One request came from our party and the other from the party of my hon. friends to my right. Such a debate would put the situation before the government and the government would be able to tell hon. members what it proposes to do to meet the problem. But no, Mr. Chairman, this situation has been allowed to drift until now we begin to get reports about an impending disaster.

According to these reports, the minimum amount of grain that is out of condition is 200 million bushels. According to one of the private grain companies, the maximum amount could run to around 400 million bushels of wheat, barley, coarse grains and so on. Such a loss would be very expensive. Unless we do something about it losses will be substantial. We are facing an emergency, a disaster that could be compared with some of the worst disasters that Canada has suffered in times of floods or similar calamities. We must stop and consider the enormity of the situation. Nobody's house has been flooded or burnt down; nobody's farm has been washed away. But on farm after farm in western Canada lies grain which, unless conditioned and dried, will be lost.

[Mr. Gleave.]

I plead with the government, to make available substantial amounts of aid and to take action to meet this situation. I think it would be perfectly reasonable to suggest that the government share 50 per cent of the cost of drying grain locally. This could run to a fair amount of money, but far greater losses will occur if the grain is not dried.

If farmers are unable to deliver their grain they will not receive any cash. Therefore, how can they pay the people who are going to dry their grain? They are strapped for money. I suggest that a program be worked out which will effectively help our farmers. Such a program is long past due. What is required is a controller to co-ordinate the operations of the different agencies, the activities of the Canadian Wheat Board and the Board of Grain Commissioners and the transportation system in order to get the most from these various agencies.

● (4:40 p.m.)

The task before us now is to co-ordinate the work of farm dryers at the local level so as to use all the facilities possible. Even so, it will be difficult enough because we are approaching the time of year when local farm drying is at a disadvantage owing to weather, temperature, humidity and so on. We must fight the difficulties. It will cost us more money, but we must accept the fact. We should be providing advice as to the operation of these dryers. Insufficient information has been provided. I know this is so because I was obliged to telephone Winnipeg for information which should have been available at the local grain elevator.

According to a report in a newspaper the other day 30 per cent of the grain which has already been dried has been spoiled. This is a shocking figure, a shocking loss. We should help by providing off-site drying facilities. An all-out effort must be made or else the losses will be substantial. The situation calls for the fullest use of extension staffs of the universities and of the Department of Agriculture, as well as the Board of Grain Commissioners. I know that in Saskatchewan and parts of Manitoba steps have been taken in this direction. University people and experts from the departments of agriculture are beginning to work together to pass on information to the farmers.

Mr. Atkinson, the president of the farmers' union, says flatly that the government will have to provide substantial assistance to farmers if a disaster is to be avoided. In his