

*Supply—Agriculture*

Pool under date of December 3, wherein the minister of agriculture of Saskatchewan points out the serious situation that now exists. I mention these news comments in passing to emphasize that there really is a serious situation.

• (5:20 p.m.)

I would like to list a few of the factors involved in this problem. I think the basic problem is that we have such an enormous pile-up of grain. We have a backlog of grain which has accumulated from past years. The pile-up of grain has resulted from the lack of sales caused by the lapsing of the international wheat agreement. This has brought about a serious condition in regard to the economic welfare of western Canada, as the minister knows. The figures for the last crop year indicate that as of July 31 we had sold only 30 per cent of the grain sold the previous year. This indicates that inland terminals, facilities on the farms and all other storage space available was filled. This creates a problem in the handling of wet grain at this time because there is not the space available in which to carry out the drying.

The second problem is the transportation of grain. This was emphasized by the hon. member for Mackenzie and others. We must facilitate the movement of grain. The availability of dryers is another serious matter. It was very interesting to note Mr. McNamara's warning last week to the transport committee when in Winnipeg. He said that the total drying capacity of the facilities at the terminals at the head of the lakes, at Vancouver and also at the inland terminals, was only 12 million to 13 million bushels a month. If you take the figure that Mr. McNamara quoted, 380 million bushels of wet grain, include the drying capacity at inland terminals and elsewhere, and exaggerate the figure a little and say that the capacity is 15 million bushels, you can readily understand the problem facing our farmers. Even with these terminal drying facilities operating at full capacity 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with approximately only four months to perform this operation they will not get 100 million bushels dried, which is the figure some people have optimistically quoted.

The grain is very wet and is in a serious condition. It is relatively preserved now because of freezing conditions but as soon as the warmer weather of spring, which is four months hence, arrives, the grain will spoil beyond recovery. Therefore, the capacity of

grain drying terminals is a very serious matter. I do not know how we can alleviate the situation at the terminals because we must be realistic and recognize that the terminal elevators require a certain amount of space in which to keep dry grain available for future sales or overseas markets. The problem comes right back to Mr. Farmer on the farm. We must do what we can to assist him to carry out an emergency drying operation during the next three or four months.

The fourth problem is the capacity of dryers related to the dampness of the grain. When you have damp or wet grain the normal capacity of a grain dryer is cut down to possibly one-third. This varies, of course, according to the moisture content of the grain. With a moisture content of 14.5 to 16 per cent the dryers can handle it easily. But when it reaches the 20 or 30 level of moisture we really have a problem. It takes two, three, and sometimes four times as long to dry grain with this moisture content.

In addition, in the winter, which is quite different from summer as far as grain drying is concerned, the farmer has to use drying machines in confined or enclosed buildings such as a machine shed or large granary. The moment you extract moisture from the grain you saturate the air in the building and the maximum drying capacity of the machine is reduced in proportion to the dampness in the air. This is another situation that aggravates the problem. I am very much concerned that even considering the number of dryers available in the most optimistic way, in view of the figures we have, which are for normal conditions and not to meet abnormal conditions, we shall not be able to dry all the damp grain on the farms.

Therefore the government should take steps under an incentive program to induce Canadian manufacturers to manufacture dryers, or obtain them from the United States. The government should also seriously consider the suggestion made by the hon. member for Huron the other day, that if dryers are available in eastern Canada they should be sent where they can be used to the maximum in the next four months.

The fifth problem is the unavailability of cash with which to purchase these machines even on a co-operative or collective basis. In addition, cash is needed to cover the operation of dryers. As hon. members know, the fuel used in these machines is basically propane gas. This is a very expensive gas and it is used in great quantities in dryers. When