

Supply—Agriculture

Mr. Olson: It is true, and I can explain that statement in a couple of sentences. If hon. members really want to be objective and get at the root of solving these problems, then I suggest that what the hon. member for Fraser Valley said is far more beneficial in the search for solutions than all the whining and complaining that went on from members opposite.

The hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain tried to impress upon me that there were problems with grain drying. I acknowledged at the outset that this was a problem of great magnitude. The hon. member suggested that certain services be provided by the Board of Grain Commissioners. I want him to know that these services are already being provided and that we are going to expand them as rapidly as we can. This service on the part of the Board of Grain Commissioners is free, and is directed as much as possible to what you might call quality control, offering advice and that sort of thing, in order to see no serious mistakes are made which would damage the quality and grade of the wheat.

The hon. member also suggested that the F.C.C. declare a moratorium on payments. I would advise the hon. member that we are not prepared to do this. However, we have, and have had for some time, a regulation whereby anyone who has been severely adversely affected by weather conditions can apply to the F.C.C. for deferment of his payment. If just cause can be shown for deferring the payment, then permission is granted.

The hon. member for Madawaska-Victoria, I believe it was, inquired about setting up a potato marketing board. May I tell him that the task force is looking into that matter. But even more important than this, in co-operation with the provincial ministers we have, in my view, made a great deal of progress toward finding a way, legally and technically, of empowering a national marketing board to take this step. We are not particularly concerned whether this means a transfer of jurisdiction in this particular area from the provinces to the federal government, or whether some contractual arrangement is made. But if this action is taken, we want the result to be workable. Throughout the meetings that we had with the provinces going as far back, in my experience, as July, a great deal of progress has been made, and there has been a meeting of minds in an attempt to resolve this problem.

The hon. member also suggested that there has been a reduction in potato acreage in

New Brunswick; or perhaps he was inquiring whether there had been, it was not clear. During the five year period from 1961 to 1965 the average acreage of potatoes in New Brunswick was 53.6 thousand acres, whereas in the current year it is 61,000 acres. So there is no indication that it is down this year from that average.

I now come to some of the matters raised by the hon. member for Crowfoot. The hon. member complained that there has not been enough active sales promotion. I do not accept that statement. The Canadian Wheat Board do not announce to the world where they send their agents to try to sell grain. He complained about the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce being away in South America and failing to sell grain. How does the hon. member know that the minister was not trying to sell grain down there? I would be very surprised if he were not.

Mr. Stanfield: He told me that he was not.

Mr. Horner: I never said that. We have never sold grain to South America.

Mr. Olson: Well, Mr. Chairman, I suppose we would be criticized if we did not explore every possibility of selling grain, whether in South America, Asia or anywhere else.

The hon. member also complained about a drop in flour exports. I am as concerned as anybody about lagging flour exports or any other commodity, but I do not think the hon. member is justified in suggesting that the Canadian Wheat Board is not doing a good job of sales promotion.

The hon. member also complained about research, and said we were lagging behind. I think he read from the report of the Economic Council when he suggested that we were lagging behind the research efforts of the United States, or wherever it was. I wonder whether the number of scientists per million acres or the number of dollars spent on research, and so on, is really the measure. In this context the hon. member was talking about cereal plant breeding, I think. As far as hard wheat is concerned, more new varieties have been developed in Canada than in any other part of the world. So I do not think we need apologize for what our researchers have been doing in this area.

The hon. member also talked about the steering committee of the conference next March and suggested there was insufficient representation, but I have answered that.