

Grain workers in elevators and elsewhere are known to be at considerable risk due to grain dust which leads to lung disease.

Finally—and Senator Olson has often spoken of this—the deteriorating financial situation in the agricultural industry and the stress that results therefrom is leading to a poor mental and emotional health situation among farmers and their families. In some cases, this stress has resulted in suicide, marital breakdown, substance abuse and family violence.

Unfortunately, honourable senators, national data and Canada-wide information are lacking on these many hazards and the extent to which they lead to fatalities, injuries and illnesses. While there appears to be some research into a number of the areas, the research does not appear to be coordinated nor the results widely disseminated to bring the educational value of these matters to the attention of our farm communities. We need to know more about pesticides. We need to know more about herbicides as well as other chemicals, and the dangers they cause. We need to know more about protective equipment, and to have advice and training in their correct use passed on to farmers. We need to do more in the way of training and protection in relation to farm machinery. Also important is an examination of noise and the dust hazard for grain handlers. Finally, the effects of emotional stress must be alleviated. These could be lessened in an effort to reduce the mental and emotional breakdown that is experienced by many farm families.

Our committee study could contribute to increasing awareness of the problems both within the farming and the rural communities as well as among the general public, and could lead to a national collation and collection of information. The knowledge gleaned thereby into the causes of these injuries and health hazards could then be passed on to the farm communities. This could help us develop a reasonable, decent research system that would lead to preventive measures for the betterment of health in our farm communities.

I thank honourable senators for their attention, and to our committee for making this request.

Senator Molgat: Would Senator Barootes permit a question?

Senator Barootes: Certainly.

Senator Molgat: Could you tell us how long you expect this inquiry to last, and whether it is the intention of the committee to travel? In order to gather the views of farmers in Western Canada, you would have to be there on the scene and make a proper assessment.

Senator Barootes: Honourable senator, this is true. We do intend to travel. In June of this year, however, some committee members attended an international symposium on occupational health in Regina, and then had a follow-up with farm members and associated government agencies. At that time we gleaned some information, and with that information in hand, we intend to bring to the committee people who have specific

[Senator Barootes.]

and particular knowledge, and then thereafter travel perhaps to Western Canada.

More important, we wish to travel to two areas in the United States, one at Davis, California, and one at Iowa City, Iowa, where two centres of the type I have discussed today have been set up to collate and collect national information and to do research for all of the United States. That is the type of travel that we would like to undertake.

As to the time element, I think the committee will require perhaps a year or more to collect the necessary information and to bring in a decent report for the consideration of this chamber.

Senator Bosa: What about the budget?

Hon. H.A. Olson: As seconder of the motion, I want to say that I attended some of the discussions and meetings to which Senator Barootes referred. I endorse what he has had to say about the motion.

Senator Molgat: Honourable senators, in view of the very high level of the seconder that Senator Barootes was able to obtain, I find it difficult to oppose the motion, and I do not intend to do so. This is an area that indeed requires study.

When Senator Barootes first started to speak, I was concerned that the committee would look only at the mechanical problems of power takeoffs and other such difficulties. I was heartened when he said that they would look at what is an increasing problem, and that is stress. Quite obviously, the stress is not only on the farmer himself; the stress is very much on the farmer's family, the wife and the children. I would hope that the committee, in its study, will not limit itself purely to the farmer. The question relates to all of the problems of the farm family, and it ought to be studied.

At the University of Saskatchewan, work has been done on this problem. Will people from that area be asked to appear before the committee? Will they be involved in the committee's work? Whatever has been done in that regard ought to be incorporated as quickly as possible.

I am interested in hearing that the committee will be looking at some of the work done in the United States. However, I believe there has also been some Canadian work which we should not overlook. I am prepared to support the motion.

Senator Barootes: Thank you. Your statement was very well made and your question was very well put. Indeed, one of the first witnesses we intend to call is Dr. Jim Dosman from this centre in Saskatoon which has been operating for six or eight years. They have developed a considerable amount of information of a local nature. We also want to see what happens in Prince Edward Island with potato farming, in Ontario with corn farming, in Quebec with dairy farming and in Saskatchewan and Alberta with stock and grain farming.

You are quite right when you say that the stress on families is far greater than we have realized in the past. At meetings we attended we saw tears rolling down the faces of people as