

Adjournment Debate

prices and the farmers' share of the price, whether high or low. The board's principle of pooling prices is put into jeopardy, and I know immense difficulties are created for the minister in trying to solve the problem of correcting the injustice suffered by particular farmers. I know a producer in the Willow Bunch country who on July 31 delivered 900 bushels. He talked to the elevator operator, who told him that it would be advantageous to hold it over to the new crop year. He thought about it, but decided to let the 900 bushels go, and then he woke up one morning to find he had lost between \$3,000 and \$3,500.

Another producer who was on the point of retiring had a farmer take charge of his land and work it in the summer. When the quotas came off, his hired hand delivered every bushel that he had grown to the elevator at the old crop year price. That man lost thousands of dollars in the very year he was trying to retire. Other producers were caught in a situation of delivering 2,000, 3,000 or 5,000 bushels of grain and because of not holding it over, lost because of the new price.

If the open market system were in operation, I would say that is the problem and one should take what one gets: in other words, one should take the rap. However, when you have a Wheat Board which is supposed to work on the principle of orderly marketing and pooling incomes, but tinkers in this situation, you create immense problems. The minister pointed out that backdating the new crop year to July 1 instead of July 31 would be too cumbersome. I agree. That is a cumbersome suggestion and I accept his point of view.

I have a suggestion, however, and perhaps he will consider the possibility of making a payment above the final payment on the crop year, per bushel, out of the funds or revenue to be taken in the new crop year, say in the neighbourhood of 50 cents which would equalize the two. Maybe that is much more radical, but obviously he knows and I know the cause of concern on the Prairies is the idea of taking the two pool accounts and putting them together. I would appreciate the minister's comments on this matter.

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the fair way in which the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Knight) has set forth the problem, and the serious difficulty some farmers feel they are in in comparing their own position with that of others who thought that better prices would be available in the new pool and therefore held their crop. I have one reservation in remaining completely aloof and non-partisan in this particular discussion: that is my need to observe that I believe the reason some people sold their grain in the old pool without thinking there might a better price was that at least some honourable and right honourable members in this House were suggesting that a good deal of grain had been sold two or three years ahead at such low prices that it really did make any difference. They were being rather misled by this kind of Tory advice.

The real difficulty I see in what the hon. member is suggesting in his own solution, and indeed in any solution that takes money out of one pool and puts it in another, is that this is a law which has stood for a long time in relation to pools. There was a storage opportunity available, but of course not equally available to everybody in

[Mr. Knight.]

the real sense of the word, having regard to small farmers not being quite so able to hold. But I can hardly see taking money which belongs to some farmers under the law, the farmers who are in the new pool, and sharing it with a different group, some who were in and some who were not in one or the other.

I would be glad to consider whether for the future we should look at some such provision which, with adequate notice, would then be fair to apply. It is, of course, the nature of pools that at some point you have to draw a line, and we have chosen the pool instead of the day to day price which exists in the open market. But when it was chosen many years ago it was chosen for a year at a time.

As I say, Mr. Speaker, I am quite prepared to look at the question for the future as to whether or not we can adopt some formula to protect against this situation that would allow averaging of some sort, but I can hardly see doing it at this point in time, retroactively, when it would be the money of one group of farmers which would have to be applied to a different group in order to make such a formula work.

LABOUR CONDITIONS—SUGGESTED INCREASE IN
MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. Don Blenkarn (Peel South): Mr. Speaker, on September 11 last I asked the Minister of Labour (Mr. Munro) whether, in view of the Prime Minister's statement of September 4, consideration was being given by statute or otherwise to increasing the minimum wage. The minister said it was under consideration then.

● (2210)

In reviewing the matter, I find that the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) asked approximately the same question of the same minister back in April of this year. The minister then said that the matter was being given consideration. He said then that the matter was "now" under consideration. The word "now" is pretty important. It was being considered for six months or six weeks, depending on how you look at this. Presumably "now" to this government means never.

We have in this country an inflation rate of 8½ per cent. What was a year ago \$1.90 is \$1.74 today. We have many people working for wages that are pretty small because of the inflation factor, and we have had brought into this House provisions amending the Income Tax Act to provide for people who pay income tax the beneficial results of a reduction in taxes in accordance with the depreciation of the dollar. Recently measures were brought in dealing with increases in the old age pension and the veterans allowance, and on the order paper there is a bill to increase pensions under the Canada Pension Plan and to index those pensions.

However, what I ask the minister tonight is a question about the working poor. What about the man who is trying to support a family on the kind of minimum wage that is set in this country? What happens to him? If he works for 40 hours a week—and that is the work week—he receives \$76. That is \$304 a month for a four-week month. He receives less than a man and his wife on the old age