

Government Wheat Policy

The first questions were asked on this subject on the second day of the session. The house was informed that everything was under control, that it was desirable to wait until the harvest had been completed before determining what action should be taken. Later, when it became perfectly apparent to all that a serious situation had developed in western Canada, the government gave an assurance that everything possible was being done to deal with the problem of tough and damp grain.

Hon. members were assured that terminal facilities were being used to the full at both lakehead and inland terminals. Later it was disclosed in reply to further questioning that these terminals were not in fact being used to the full, that there was difficulty in moving grain to the terminals. It then transpired that there were difficulties in getting box cars. The transportation problem was referred to yesterday by the chairman of the wheat board in the statement to which the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain referred.

In reply to further inquiries we were told that the Saskatchewan department of agriculture had found there were some 800 farm dryers in the province at the present time, and that as a result everything was under control. On the following day, under renewed questioning, the Minister of Agriculture backtracked with respect to that statement. Recently I drew the attention of the house to a protest sent to the Minister of Agriculture by the Saskatchewan federation of agriculture in which it took issue with the minister's statement that the situation was well in hand. As a matter of fact the Saskatchewan wheat pool is quoted in a farm broadcast on November 12 as saying "the committee strongly states that this is not the case." The reference is to the situation being well in hand. As reported in the *Leader-Post* of November 19 the Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture also stated there were 100 million bushels of wheat in the province which would have to be dried elsewhere than in commercial drying facilities.

Now we are faced with a statement by the chairman of the wheat board making it clear that the bulk of tough and damp grain will have to be dried on farms in western provinces. Thus I think it is abundantly plain that any semblance of a government program has been lacking, despite the assurance of its spokesman that they have the situation well in hand and are watching it closely. I maintain that the only way an adequate discussion

of this problem is possible at this stage, having regard to the manner in which the situation has developed over the past number of weeks, is by allowing this motion. That would at least permit a full discussion of the serious situation which is affecting the entire national economy of Canada.

• (3:10 p.m.)

Mr. S. J. Korchinski (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, this matter has been raised in the house on numerous occasions by many hon. members on this side. We have tried to impress the government with the seriousness of the situation. I refer to only two instances. One was on November 7 when the matter was raised with the Minister without Portfolio (Mr. Lang) from Saskatchewan. At that time he said he was not aware of any problem concerning an insufficient number of box cars. Again, on November 13 I asked the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) about this matter, and he replied that he had been in contact with the wheat board that very day and said he had no reason to believe that the situation presently existing is abnormal.

In reply to a supplementary question the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) told me the terminal elevators were operating on a five day basis. Despite the urgency of the situation the terminal elevators at the lakehead are still operating only on a five day basis. Unless the government can be impressed with the fact that these terminal elevators must operate on a seven day basis, there cannot be any relief for the farmers.

Why is it urgent that the terminal elevators operate on a seven day basis? Much of the grain that has been harvested is of low quality. Consequently any grain that can be sold will not command a very high price, in fact approximately only two thirds of the normal price for No. 2 wheat. The situation is so urgent that one cannot expect farmers to sell their grain at that price and then turn around and pay for commercial dryers out in the country. The farmers must be able to sell their grain and have it delivered at the terminal elevators. In that way they will receive some money from the wheat board and have some income with which to continue operations.

The farmers cannot be expected to pay for the drying of grain and then store it for a year or two, as may now be necessary with the present developing situation. As I understand it, even at this late date there are