

*Supply—Agriculture*

average, the nation, the Minister of Agriculture and the government of Canada surely cannot expect the farmers to bear all the cost of making substantial expenditures for grain drying equipment that will sit in their yard for five years out of six, or for six years out of seven or eight years. Surely we cannot expect them to bear that cost.

What has happened is not their fault. It is not the fault of the government either; I cannot blame the government for the weather. If I could find a way to do it, I would. Surely it is unfair to expect the farmers to make these substantial expenditures for equipment that will be used this winter and then sit idle for several years. For the individual farmer, this means thousands of dollars of capital, which he does not have, being tied up in extraordinary equipment which in most years is of no benefit as a capital asset on the farm.

Mr. Chairman, I think I have got beyond the point where I lost my temper and will try to be a little warmer now. I hope the Minister of Agriculture will realize that I sincerely mean what I say. I think he is capable of being the best Minister of Agriculture this country has ever had, but I suggest that until he convinces his colleagues on the front benches, and the Prime Minister, that this is a national emergency he will be stuck with the blame, and no one else. I suggest that everyone in this house and this government must take the basic position that this vast problem is much too large for individual farmers to tackle. If there is spoilage of grain, the loss must be that of the whole country and not just of the farmer. The additional cost of drying is unusual. This is no fault of the farmers and therefore they should not be required to bear it alone. Therefore, government action on a massive scale on a number of fronts is warranted and essential in the national interest. This is the position of the New Democratic party. It is a national emergency because a loss of large amounts of grain through spoilage affects the entire Canadian economy. The first to suffer are the farmers because they have a drastic increase in expenses and a drop in their income which has already suffered a decline this year.

This is a national emergency because it affects stocks available for export in the next two years, which in turn will hurt our balance of payment position. There will be layoffs in the farm machinery and the transportation industries, and a subsequent slowdown in supporting industries. There will be a drop in retail sales. Small businessmen will be hurt

[Mr. Benjamin.]

and so on down the line. This is a national emergency and must be treated as such by the government. In spite of advance warning as early as mid September the government, to date, has shown the imagination of a door-knob and has moved with the speed of a snail to cope with the situation. In fact it has contributed to the problems of the farm industry this fall by permitting unwarranted increased interest rates on farm loans.

I should like to make some proposals. I know the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain has already done this, but I have some other positive proposals. First, I suggest a crash program to instal additional grain drying facilities in government terminals both interior, lakehead and seaport. Second, I suggest incentives for elevator companies to instal additional drying equipment, with the government picking up the shipping costs, giving tax credits, and exempting the companies from the tariff and sales tax. Third, I suggest authority and incentives for elevator companies to instal grain dryers at selected country elevator points. The fourth proposal is that a complete and thorough survey should be made in respect of where the damp grain is located, and where the dryers are. Fifth, the government should pay transportation costs for moving dryers from place to place where needed. Then sixth, all available and suitable dryers in the United States should be located, hired, and airlifted to the prairie provinces, with the transportation costs paid by the government. Dryers should be brought in, along with any competent personnel needed to run them, with the rental and transportation costs paid.

My seventh proposal is that because of light weight grain the wheat board should be reimbursed for all dead freight charges on carload lots of tough and damp grain, so that the farmers will not be required to pay for this through the board, or the railways should be required to lower the minimum carload weights on all grains that are out of condition. Eighth, all possible off-track storage such as airport hangars, curling rinks, skating rinks and warehouses should be located and dryers placed there. How about using some imagination, Mr. Minister? The government should pay the cost of fitting such buildings for temporary grain storage. Ninth, the farmers should be encouraged and assisted in respect of the building of homemade dryers.

The tenth suggestion is that at points where dryers are operated under government or commercial auspices the farmers be paid 20