

*Supply—Agriculture*

● (5:50 p.m.)

Well, basically, the problem is weather. The second problem is the fact that it is the government's duty to market grain. It is all well and good for somebody to say it is the duty of the wheat board to sell grain. The wheat board serves the Canadian farmers with government assistance, it is a government board set up to market the grain for western farmers. I have long argued that the wheat board should be in the hands of the Minister of Agriculture. I cannot for the life of me see why he should have to sit in the House of Commons and defend the wheat board while the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, who has that responsibility, is absent. In fact, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce is not even suited to this task. I hold nothing against him, however.

I recall that during the election campaign the Prime Minister said he would appoint cabinet ministers without regard for region but with regard for their knowledge and capabilities. This is an obvious situation in which the Prime Minister made an appointment without regard for region or for knowledge. What should the government have done? It should have moved a lot faster. Some time ago the wheat board sent a delegation to China to try to increase our sales by reaching a new agreement. The delegation was successful in selling grain, but under the old agreement.

Recently the Board of Grain Commissioners appeared before the agriculture committee and stated that their basic problem in aiding the marketing of grain was money. The wheat board operates on the farmers' money and the Board of Grain Commissioners operate on government money. The wheat board should be given assistance in marketing grain by the Department of Trade and Commerce. The minister spent a month in South America, and it is a well known fact we do not sell too much wheat in that area. We have been getting along this year on poor wheat sales under the old agreement. Western Canada is concerned about the problem. The outlook for wheat sales is poor. The minister knows that the government has been slow to move the grain out of the terminals after it was dried. If it were moved faster space would be available at the major lakehead terminals and at the Vancouver terminal. However, Mr. Chairman, grain is not moving out. There is a backlog because there are insufficient drying facilities. Only 13.8 million bushels can be dried at the terminals per month.

What should the government do about this situation? First of all, it should institute a major crash program to sell this wheat after it has been dried. This it is not doing. The minister shakes his head. He knows full well that the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce was in South America for a month and a half and that the farmers themselves, in a way, paid for two men to go to China with the wheat board to work out a wheat agreement. But I suggest our salesmen should have gone to Russia three months ago and also visited Poland and other countries in an effort to work out some agreement.

It was suggested in the agricultural committee that the Board of Grain Commissioners should look into the possibility of building a terminal in Europe to handle our grain so that we would have ready access to the European common market. But that as it may, I suggest that insufficient pressure is put on grain movement. In the agricultural committee the Board of Grain Commissioners was asked how the grains council is fitting into the scheme of things and their representatives said that they did not know. We also asked the representatives from the eastern feed board the same question, and they did not know either. Nobody knows, and as a result the grain sales situation is in a state of flux.

What has been the position in the last few years in regard to Canada's flour sales? The minister is well aware of the flour sales that we used to make. For example, I should like to quote part of an article extracted from the *Winnipeg Free Press* to illustrate my point:

Canada, which for many years led the world in flour exports, is now running a bad third after the United States and the European common market.

This gives the committee some idea of the extent to which we are falling down, Mr. Chairman. The article goes on:

Extensive gains have been made in the export of flour by other countries. These are chiefly members of the common market (France, Germany and Italy).

Then the article suggests that Great Britain will reduce its imports of flour from 12 million bushels to something like five million bushels.

Surely, Mr. Chairman, the minister can look into this problem and, if necessary, institute a subsidy program for manufactured flour. I understand there was a subsidy in past years, and maybe a subsidy is still paid.