

than normal movement of barley. However, there is also the fact that in other years, because of railway service, sales have been lost.

• (2130)

When I think for a moment of the situation in which prairie farmers find themselves, of their incomes this year and in past years, of the transportation system which in a great many cases has not enabled them to sell their products to any great extent, I feel sick. The movement of our agricultural products from the Prairies is of paramount importance and is the whole foundation of the western economy. This is borne out by the statistics which show that 60 per cent of our agricultural products must of necessity be exported to other parts of Canada and to other parts of the world simply because we do not have the population in western Canada to consume the products we produce.

Historically, wheat has been by far the biggest crop in western Canada. Technology in wheat growing and other techniques have drastically reduced the causes of serious crop failures in western Canada as well as in other parts of Canada. Even in 1967 during the widespread drought conditions in Saskatchewan our grain crop exceeded the long-term average. We have hardier varieties of grain and greatly improved farm equipment, and the increased use of pesticides and herbicides and a much heavier application of fertilizers has contributed to the high yields per acre achieved in recent years which has given cause for optimism for the future. Improved technology has permitted farmers to put into production lands which formerly had been considered marginal or submarginal. I think it is significant that in 1968 nearly one million tons of fertilizer was used in the prairie provinces, compared with only 85,000 tons in 1950.

This trend will continue as farms become larger and the need to reduce costs per unit becomes greater. As a result, the Canadian wheat crop in the latter part of the 1960s has been extremely large. The crop harvested in 1966 was the largest on record and subsequent crops have also been extremely large. Improved farm technology is an important factor in the expansion of Canadian wheat production but it is also a big factor in the dramatic increase in self-sufficiency of the developing countries so far as grain production is concerned. For example, new strains of wheat have been developed for adaptation in warmer climates, which has led to improved harvests in many developing countries. Increases in wheat production in India and Pakistan are of particular significance. India now claims that within two years she might become self-sufficient so far as grain production or agricultural production is concerned. Advances in milling and baking technology have also permitted many countries to which we used to sell, to use their own wheat to greater advantage and hence not depend on our wheat to the same extent as a few years ago.

This is the background against which I think we should review the present government's position with regard to the grain transportation industry in Canada. A commodity such as wheat or barley depends on speedy marketing and a rapid response to customer needs, not only in Canada but also overseas. In this sense an adequate transportation system is essential. More than ever it is now

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necessary to ship from western grain growing provinces the customers, which brings honestly earned income to our farmers in western Canada. These markets must be won and held on a continuing basis.

I believe that given the proper initiative Canada could, and I expect she will within the next few years, export one billion bushels of grain a year. I foresee this in the near future. This depends on our ability, not necessarily to produce the product but to deliver it to our customers. Our agricultural system is only as strong as its weakest link and in the past few months it has been made obvious that the weakest link has been our transportation system to the west coast.

Rail traffic has suffered difficulties due to snowslides and adverse conditions in the Rocky Mountains, but I suggest that snowslides in the Rocky Mountains in the wintertime are not new. Clearly we must concern ourselves, not only as members of parliament but as grain producers, with what I consider to be the four basic needs which should be acted upon at present. As has been mentioned before in the House, we need increased storage at our Vancouver terminal. I realize as well as anybody else that building storage is an expensive business, but I think that given the proper techniques storage could be designed relatively cheaply. We do not need expensive storage but we need more of it than we presently have to be used for what I would call a surge capacity. So long as we have winters such as we have, threats of strikes or slowdowns of railway employees, we will always have the problem of transporting the product out to the port from which it will be shipped. I think increased storage is of paramount importance to the total grain transportation.

Secondly, a few months ago there was a unit train which was moved from one of our inland terminals at Saskatoon to Vancouver. This train, comprised of hopper bottom cars and three large diesel locomotives, hauled cleaned grain from one of our government inland terminals, which has not been used to a great extent directly, to Vancouver and then loaded it directly on to a waiting vessel. The system worked well at the time and I wonder why it is not being used at present to move grain out to Vancouver. The system is used so far as the potash industry is concerned and I believe it is high time this method was adopted on a continuing basis to move grain.

• (2140)

The third thing which should be realized and acted upon by the railways is that more hopper bottomed cars are needed and that these should not be put into service only when an emergency arises, as seems to be the case at present. I think we can call the present situation an emergency when we are roughly 30 million bushels of grain behind in our export shipments. Many of the railways cars now in use are antiquated. They are slow to fill and slow to unload. New kinds of cars must be purchased and used on a continuing basis. The old rail cars at present in use move about 2,000 bushels of grain each. The new cars can move about 3,000 bushels of grain and can transport it more efficiently and quickly. As a result, the unit cost per car is lowered. The unit train that I mentioned which ran to Vancouver carried 270,000 bushels of grain. There is no reason why two unit trains could not be moved from each of our inland terminals each week. This would amount to