

is wanted. I shall not have time to do so to-night, but before this session is over I can produce the documentary evidence necessary to prove every statement I make. This organization came to the administration time after time and asked them to operate a wheat board on its behalf to protect the wheat growers of western Canada, but the request was refused time and again. Within a year after the new administration of 1936 took office, the wheat board ceased operating as an active agent in the marketing of wheat, and the peg was held at ninety cents a bushel. Later, in 1938, the price was fixed by the wheat board, through government action, at eighty cents a bushel. The following spring the present Minister of Agriculture came west and told the western people that we could no longer expect to have a pegged wheat board price of eighty cents a bushel; that it was too big a load for this country to carry, that it was costing Canada too many millions of dollars, and that we would have to submit to a drastic reduction, in other words from eighty cents a bushel to sixty cents a bushel, basis 1 northern at the point of delivery at terminal elevators, Port Arthur, Fort William or Vancouver.

Mr. GARDINER: I am sure my hon. friend will agree that the second proposal was an initial payment, not a price; eighty cents was the fixed price.

Mr. BENTLEY: I stand corrected. It was an initial payment of sixty cents through the wheat board, which, deducting an average of sixteen or seventeen cents, would leave the farmers at the point of delivery somewhere around forty-three or forty-four cents at his local point. Again we in the west had to go into action. The officials of organized farmers came and interviewed members of the cabinet here, but the sixty cents a bushel initial payment still stood. Again we had to do the only thing we could—go out and plough through the snow and mud, in the spring of 1939, and get 156,000 names to a petition asking the government not to reduce their payment from eighty cents to sixty cents. Finally, after that petition came here, the payment was reduced not to sixty cents, but only to seventy cents, and was held that way until the winter of 1941-42, when again numerous representations, politely couched, were made to the government by the officials of the organized western wheat growers, to increase the initial payment per bushel from seventy cents to \$1 because of the war-time conditions and the already mounting costs of production on the farm. Again we were refused; again we were forced to send a petition, this time signed by 186,000 Saskatchewan

[Mr. Bentley.]

people. Business men, professional men, farmers and other citizens took part in this effort and made contributions out of their own pockets to provide the necessary forty-odd thousand dollars to bring 400 western delegates to Ottawa to present that petition to the government.

It should not be necessary for western people to have to go to all that trouble time after time. The government was finally compelled by the logic of events to do the things which it had been asked to do before. Had the government of gentlemen on my right been still in office, it would have been compelled by the same set of circumstances to do as this government has done. Finally we got, not \$1 a bushel but ninety cents; even then they would not go the distance. Why? Why would they not agree to \$1 a bushel initial payment in the winter of 1941-42, to become effective in the crop year 1942-43? Finally, after much hesitation and after many flutterings of farmers' hearts in the west, we got an announcement that the government would grant us twenty cents increase, making ninety cents a bushel; and I think I am correct in the statement that so far as the Wheat Board Act is concerned the ninety cents initial payment is still in there, even though at the present time the board is making the initial payment of \$1.25. Remember again that this was brought about, not because the government had suddenly become sympathetic and wanted to help the farmers, but because the transportation system in war time made it impossible for a farmer or an elevator company to hedge sales of wheat against the future on the Winnipeg grain exchange and be reasonably sure of making delivery against that contract in the month in which the future was taken; and the farther the future was ahead, the less was the prospect at that time of doing so, through nobody's fault unless it be Mr. Hitler's and those who were with him. But it was impossible to lay down the stuff against a contract in the place where the contract is fulfilled in the grain business.

In order to take care of that situation, in order to avoid confusion because of that condition, the government finally brought in legislation stopping trading in wheat futures on the Winnipeg grain exchange, and authorized the wheat board to take deliveries of all wheat delivered in western Canada and pay the farmers the initial payment of \$1.25. There was not much complaint about that. We people in the west are pretty realistic.

We are not going to quarrel over all the things that have happened in the past. What I have told you, Mr. Speaker, has been told, not in bitterness, not in any way to make