

bear upon the government, and I know it was only after the fullest explanation and consideration of the question that they were able to convince those people that it would not be a good thing for them at that particular time. The situation went from bad to worse and the demand continued, and it was only when the government got together the different financial, manufacturing and wholesale interests and discussed the matter, and obtained from the loan companies a virtual guarantee that the utmost leniency would be extended that conditions improved. It was only after that assurance had been given that the demand lessened. I would like to tell this committee, as I told the government some time ago when we presented our memorandum, that I do not believe any government in Western Canada can resist the demand for action in connection with the establishment of the Wheat Board during the next season of marketing grain unless some other form of protection is provided. The life of the West particularly depends absolutely upon the farmers. In fact, the life of Canada, financially, depends almost equally as much on the farmers, and no government can afford to permit what is recognized to be the chief industry of Canada to be crippled in such a way as to render recovery practically hopeless. I am fully convinced that if a similar situation arises next fall—as I am satisfied it will unless action is taken to prevent it—no government will be able to resist the pressure that will be brought to bear upon them for protection in some way or other. The farmers cannot be exposed to a similar situation during another marketing season. If they are so exposed I make the prediction that the population of Western Canada will be very materially decreased. It has decreased during the last two years. Settlers are continually moving out, scores of them hundreds of them. That statement is not based upon an idle dream or upon guess work, but upon actual fact, and that flow of emigration from Western Canada will continue unless something is done to alleviate the distressing conditions now prevailing. In so far as the feeling of the West in the matter of acreage sown is concerned, that has been fully covered and anything I would say in that respect would be simply with a view to emphasizing what has already been said by the other speakers who have appeared before this committee. I have no hesitation in expressing my opinion that the acreage will be very much decreased unless action is taken as soon as possible. Seeding has been commenced in some of the earlier portions of the West. It will be general within the next week or ten days, and unless some assurance is given to the farmers at an early date the acreage sown will be very materially decreased in so far as wheat is concerned, and the situation in so far as other grains are concerned will be similar in character. The question was raised yesterday as to the marketing of oats and as to whether we were asking that the board should control oats. That has not been asked for, but I cannot say that I see any objection to its being done. If the oat-grower is of the opinion that his oats could be better marketed through the Wheat Board, I see no reason, personally, why it should not be done. There is not, however, the same necessity for it. The prices of wheat and oats almost always maintain a relative position to each other, and as wheat goes up in price oats usually follows and maintains a relative position to wheat. The other grains, except flax, will bear a similar relation almost continuously. As I have stated, I can see no objection, personally, to giving to the Wheat Board the power to control oats, so that that power could be exercised if the board thought it desirable. It would in no way affect the marketing of our wheat, and if it would assist the producer of oats I see no reason why the functions of the board should not be extended to the control of oats as well.

Mr. WARNER: Is not the reason why that power has not been asked for due to the fact that our oats are more largely used in our own country?

Mr. MAHARG: Yes; oats are largely used for our own consumption or in the United States. Of course, the Fordney tariff has practically killed export to the United States. It is just possible that your list of questions has been exhausted in

[Mr. J. A. Maharg.]