

Committee resumed at 4 o'clock.

The CHAIRMAN: This morning we had been listening to a report from Mr. H. H. Woods. I think the Committee would like to hear from Mr. Robinson of the Council of Agriculture.

Mr. ROBINSON: Mr. Chairman, and Gentlemen, the main argument in support of the request of the Council of Agriculture for the re-establishment of the Wheat Board will be found embodied in a certain memorandum which was presented to the Government a short while ago, copies of which I understand have been placed in your hands. Then we have had a very full, very free and very interesting discussion of the matter this morning, and in view of this it is not my intention to weary you with any lengthy remarks. There are one or two points, however, that I would like to discuss and if I have to refer to matters that have already been dealt with, my object in doing so will be to endeavour to the best of my ability to give a little further information to this Committee. There are two reasons which prompted me to come here in support of the request. The first is the very peculiar condition in which the Western farmer finds himself to-day and the other is that in so far as my own personal opinion goes I am firmly convinced that no other measure of relief will be of any practical service, or even noticeable service to the farmer under present conditions. The condition of the farmer has been referred to and I do not like to say anything that might leave you men to term me as a calamity howler, but I think that we must face the facts. The condition of the average farmer in the West to-day who depends on the raising of wheat as his main means of earning his living, is that he finds himself in the position that he is not able to meet his liabilities. It may be said that this condition is owing to mismanagement. While that might be true in individual cases, I am convinced that the farmer is in his present unsatisfactory position because of influences over which he has no control. He has had a series of bad years; he has had to put up with drought, with hail, with grasshoppers, and with something that is not so widely known, but is of equal danger to him, and to his crops. I refer to the wheat stem saw-fly. He was also led to do certain things because of good advice that was showered on him. You remember a few years ago that everybody was advising the farmer to produce and keep on producing, and he believing it was his patriotic duty did so; and many farmers incurred liabilities in those days in the effort to provide more food for our boys overseas and their allies. He entered into obligations that now when he has to meet them he finds he is unable to do so. At present people are saying, "Well, the farmer will go on anyhow." He has done so faithfully and is keeping at it,—it is true he grumbles sometimes but that is about the only privilege that is allowed him, and he has still kept going on, but I want to assure you, Mr. Chairman, and the hon. members of this Committee that many farmers are seriously considering whether they will go on and attempt to produce grain under conditions which will mean only a loss to them. It may be asked "What has this to do with the re-establishment of a Wheat Board, and what effect would it have on the price which the farmer receives for his grain?" Let me bring before you a little more in detail the influences that are operating on the farmer, he has his liabilities to meet and everybody that he is doing business with is insisting that he rushes the wheat to the market as quickly as possible. It is well known that the usual thing is that the wheat prices are higher at the opening of the market than they are say a month or two afterwards, and those who are able to get their

[Mr. James Robinson.]