

Position of Agricultural Industry

Mr. Charlton: Oh, the minister can have his fun. It is just previous to an election. If he wants to make those statements we will see how many people believe them.

I presume it is the western wheat crop that is bolstering the average farm income across Canada, and in that connection the minister makes this statement as reported at page 3223 of *Hansard*:

You can still see practically every bin the farmers have on their farms filled with wheat. In other words the farmer has practically a whole crop still to market.

And farther on he says:

—but five million tons—more food to send out to the world, because of growing surpluses—

Now, 5 million tons sounds like a great amount of food; but if the minister would take the difference between an ordinary wheat crop I think he will find it is nearer twice 5 million tons of extra food produced in the west in the year 1952.

It takes 166,666,666 bushels to make 5 million tons; and the wheat crop in the west last year was far more than that above the average. So in that instance the minister is low. But he is taking that figure of the added wheat crop as bolstering the average farm income across Canada.

At this point I should like to quote from the *Current Review* setting out agricultural conditions in Canada. This is the issue of March, 1953, volume 13, number 4. At page 2 it says:

The higher income from field crops because of the harvest of a large part of the 1951 grain crop in the spring of 1952 and the unprecedented 1952 crops, did much to balance the lowered income from livestock and their products.

That is the answer to the reasonably high income across Canada which, as the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggart (Mr. Coldwell) said this afternoon, is 14 per cent below the 1952 figure. The income of livestock producers is down 30 per cent from 1951.

Twenty per cent of the population in Canada received around 11 per cent of the national income. The farmers must have a realistic floor price policy. It is as important to the consumers as it is to the producers, as a means of stabilizing production and assuring a reasonable supply of food. The floor price policy is actually a Conservative policy brought out in 1942 by the then leader of the Conservative party, Mr. Bracken. Owing to the pressure exerted by agriculture all across this country, the Liberal government put it into legislative form in 1944.

In closing I wish to say this: Let the government step down from the throne of self-satisfaction and arrogance on which they

[Mr. Gardiner.]

have placed themselves, and accept the responsibility which is rightly theirs.

Mr. E. G. Hansell (Macleod): Mr. Speaker, I wish to add my voice to those who have already spoken in support of this amendment, and I do so partly because I live in an agricultural area and partly because I know, as I believe all hon. members know, that there is no industry in Canada as unstable today as agriculture.

Recently I have received a number of letters from farmers in my own constituency complaining about the deal they are now getting, and have had over the last year, and prior to that. I would remind hon. members including the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner) that prior to the last crop year, in certain sections of this country, the wheat farmers were either rained out or snowed out. The crop two years ago, in many parts of the country, including many sections of my own constituency, remained unharvested. Last year the farmers had difficulty due to the glut of lower grade wheat in the elevators, which resulted in difficulty in moving the grain.

While we realize that there was an outlet at the Pacific coast, we are now faced with a strike problem there, and this again affects the movement of grain. All these things enter into the problems the farmers in western Canada have faced recently. To my mind the farmer, of all men, attempts to run his farm in the midst of constant uncertainty. If he is a wheat farmer he is uncertain in the matter of harvesting his crop; he is uncertain of the yield; he is completely reliant upon favourable elements in order that he may reap a fair crop with a fair yield. He must face the possibilities of frost; and there is the further problem of hail, which some may suggest can be covered by insurance. Nevertheless it remains an uncertain factor. Then there is the danger of drought and the danger of grasshoppers. There is the danger of rust.

All these things make the farmer's problems great, because he is constantly faced with uncertainty. Even though the elements may be favourable, he must depend upon prices, over which he has no control. If he is carrying on mixed farming, in a small way, and raises chickens so that he may sell eggs, again he will find a fluctuation in the prices of his products. If he is a dairy farmer he must face substitutes for butterfat. If he raises hogs or cattle he will find the market most unstable.

So I say once again that, of all men, the farmer must attempt to run his farm in the midst of continual uncertainty. He is in a