

Supply—Agriculture

Mr. Harkness: You see, it is right from the horse's mouth, Paul.

Mr. Regnier: Mr. Chairman, I should like to place on record the position of the Conservative party in 1946 by quoting some remarks made in this house by the then leader of the Conservative party, Mr. John Bracken. This is to be found at page 4822 of *Hansard* of August 15, 1946. Mr. John Bracken, made the following comments regarding the British wheat agreement:

It is a bad agreement because it proposes to sell 160 million bushels of wheat to Britain at 50 cents a bushel below the world price. It is either a gift or it is an improvident trade arrangement. If it is a gift, let us say so. But if it is supposed to be an insurance against low prices in the future—if because we take less for our wheat today than it is worth Britain is expected to pay more for our wheat two years from now than the world price when it may be lower, I say that as an insurance that this will be done, it is valueless.

It is a bad bargain also because it will create friction between Britain and Canada. If in two or three years from now the world price of wheat is low and Britain does not come through with a higher price to us than the world price then is, we shall feel that she has reneged on this agreement. On the other hand, if two or three years from now, when the world price of wheat may be low, we press Britain to pay us more than the world price, she will feel that we are unreasonable. So I say that the proposal is altogether likely to create friction between this country and Britain.

The third reason why this is a bad bargain is that it will cause friction with other nations as well. It will invite criticism from the wheat-producing nations, because here we are selling wheat to the greatest wheat importer of the world at 50 cents a bushel below the world price. What are other wheat-producing nations to think of a policy of that kind?

At page 4824 of *Hansard* of the same date Mr. Bracken said:

Now with respect to the government's wheat policy generally. I make this criticism: it is not fair to the farmers, it is not fair to a quarter of the Canadian people, it is not fair—particularly—to those who are growing wheat. It is not fair because of the price that is offered, \$1.35, while there is a possibility that something more will be coming after the end of five years, there is no assurance that there will be. One dollar and thirty-five cents is not a fair price for wheat today. It is not a "parity price", if I may use that hackneyed term. "Parity price" is the name given to a price which is supposed to express a fair price in relation to other things. The parity price now would be about \$1.53, but \$1.35 is all the farmers are assured, at a time when the world price is nearly half as high again as that. If the farmers of Canada cannot be assured of a parity price now, when the world price is high, what prospect is there of their being assured of parity price when the world price is low, as it is sure to be later on?

If I may stop here, I think Mr. John Bracken gave a real good picture of what was going to happen. I would like to know

where the C.C.F. party was at that time when the Conservative leader was talking about parity price? I continue to quote:

The government's policy during the last two or three years has been a policy generally of floors and ceilings. That has reduced the wide fluctuations of prices, and to that extent is good; it has raised the floors and lowered the ceilings. Now there is a modification of that policy. The government comes along with this price of \$1.35, which as I have said is less than parity. The policy has been one of floors and ceilings, but now it is one even more of a controlled economy; and when the government starts in to control the economy, then when things do not go right, or any inequity is brought about, the government has no one to blame but itself. This policy is not equitable. It does not assure equity to farmers, and this is one time when the government might have given them that assurance.

As I have said, the government's policy is one of no assurance of parity when the world price is high, and even less assurance when the world price is low. The government's policy is one of making agriculture carry the cost of the loss on this sale. It is not the nation that is carrying it. The nation's economy will suffer if it does not get as much for wheat as it might have got. But the price of the loss will be borne by the farmers. The government may say that the farmers are probably getting enough, but the fact is that this is a contribution by the farmers of Canada and not by the Canadian people as a whole. When you stop to think that on this one commodity the crop is sold at four different prices—wheat for flour at 78 cents, the so-called domestic price of \$1.25, the British price of \$1.55, and now the effort is being made to sell to other countries at over \$2—you will realize that is very much of a hodge-podge, something which is most difficult to administer and does not work out equitably to the producers.

In *Hansard* for that year hon. members can also read the very good speech of the late member for Souris, Arthur Ross and the good speech of the present Prime Minister against this agreement. I believe I have performed the duty requested of me by the delegates who came from the constituency of St. Boniface by bringing this matter to the attention of the committee. Thank you.

Mr. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, before I comment on the estimates of the Department of Agriculture I, too, also wish to challenge the hon. member for Assiniboia on the remarks that he passed this afternoon that the western members have betrayed the western farmers. Let us bring this question of betrayal out into the open; let us decide once and for all who is betraying the western farmers and who has betrayed the western farmers.

Regardless of what happens in the next election, whether one member present in the house tonight or present in this government or in this parliament is returned at the next election, I think they can all say, with the exception of one and that one is the hon. member for Assiniboia, that this government has been more sympathetic to western