

Canadian Wheat Board

At this time of low prices for our wheat, every endeavour should be made to save every half cent or cent a bushel. One of the functions of the grain exchange and of the grain trade in general, including the pool elevators, is to charge producers one cent commission for handling their grain; I believe there is a regulation in the wheat board which compels them to purchase through some agency, and that agency would of necessity be some of the elevator companies which are members of the grain exchange.

An hon. MEMBER: Not compelled.

Mr. LEADER: I thought they were. At any rate the act should be amended. I believe we could save that one cent a bushel if the farmers were allowed to bill and ship their grain to the order of the wheat board. That would be a handsome saving of ten dollars on every 1,000 bushels of wheat, and by the closing of the grain exchange and billing the wheat to the wheat board, we could save that money. It is the duty of the government to supply this advantage to the producer.

I want now to say something about coarse grains. My district of Portage la Prairie is one of the greatest, if not the greatest, barley growing districts in western Canada. I have heard it said that for every bushel of wheat grown on the Portage plains we grow three bushels of barley; and if a farmer hauled that barley to Portage la Prairie to-night he would get approximately 20 cents a bushel for it—away below cost of production. I suggest that we can save at least one-quarter of a cent a bushel on that commission which is now being asked for selling our barley. I brought this matter up last year. I was negotiating with some people in Winnipeg before coming down here for the session. Some of the men agreed that we should cut the commission to three-quarters of a cent instead of the one cent a bushel now being charged, but that was a matter which would have to be settled by the grain exchange. It was taken up with the grain exchange, and I received a letter stating that the charge of one cent a bushel was reasonable and that therefore they would not lower it.

I say it is the function of the government to step in here; if the grain exchange will not play ball with us when our back is to the wall and we cannot see where our meal is coming from next winter, then we ought to get rid of the institution, and I ask the government to take prompt action. If the grain exchange were closed and we were allowed to consign our grain to the wheat board without paying that cent a bushel for selling it, we could by another method save this commission which we are

[Mr. Leader.]

now charged. I am a pool man. I have been a pool man ever since the pool was mooted in Canada as a farmers movement to help ourselves. I have always supported it and I am supporting it to-day. I have to pay my commission because that regulation in the act stipulates that the grain must go through the regular channels of trade, and I suggest that if we were allowed to ship the grain to the board we would not have to pay the one cent commission because there would be no broker in between. We have no right to pay it. We should get that money back. Some hon. members who are not conversant with the trade may wonder how we can get it back. I will tell them. The wheat pools of western Canada, at any rate in my province, remit back to the men who have shipped their grain to them—that is, platform shipments—approximately one cent a bushel; these are terminal earnings. That is the way in which the producers can get that cent back—shipping grain not through the regular channels of trade, through the grain exchange, but through their own farmers organizations. If you intend to get anywhere you must help yourself.

I want to say a word or two with regard to my occupation, the business of agriculture. It is the only business about which I know anything. I was born on the Portage plains; I live on the farm where I was born, and I have followed agriculture all my life. If I cannot convince hon. members that I know what I am talking about, there is something wrong. But I contend that I do know what I am talking about, and I know that our business is in a terrible condition. I believe that all hon. members would like to help us out; I am satisfied of that. But they do not understand the conditions. Hon. members have been told to-day what we received for our wheat on an average over a number of years, but the best indication of the income of the farmer is how much he gets per acre, because the amount harvested per acre varies. It was said that over a thirty-year period, from 1908 to 1938, I believe, the average price of wheat was 90½ cents and the average earnings per acre \$13.80. For the last ten-year period the average price was about 56 cents, and the earnings per acre, a little over \$6.

Mr. COLDWELL: The figure was \$6.81.

Mr. LECLERC: How many acres of land does a farmer farm?

Mr. LEADER: It varies from 160 to several thousand, depending upon how ambitious he is. So hon. members will see that the income has been more than cut in half in the last ten years as compared with the thirty years preceding. It has been computed