

Wheat Board Act—Mr. Ross

I will not take up any more time. I think there are many sound arguments to be advanced in favour of the government's consideration of this resolution. Coarse grain should be brought under the operation of the wheat board at once because there is a considerable quantity which has not yet changed hands in western Canada. It is the only commodity which many of the farmers there have to realize on in the line of grain and some have been holding back for a better price. I have no doubt that all western members, especially those from Saskatchewan, will endorse this resolution, for they know that ninety per cent of the farmers all through that western country are in favour of it. I trust we shall get some action.

Mr. J. G. ROSS (Moose Jaw): I wish to make a few remarks with regard to this resolution. It was not my privilege to be in parliament during the last five years, in which the then government, led by the present leader of the opposition (Mr. Bennett), got Canada's wheat and grain trade into the greatest mess it has been in since confederation. When in 1930 the right hon. gentleman took over the government of the country there was some wheat on hand—I believe that in his election campaign he said, in the neighbourhood of 127,000,000 bushels—but there was a reason for that at that time. All hon. gentlemen who remember conditions in Canada prior to 1930, when the new government took over, will recall that the people of western Canada, the grain trade, the wheat pools and the farmers, refused in 1929 to sell their wheat at a very good figure. As a matter of fact it was the surplus of the 1928 and 1929 crops which was the carry-over in 1930, when the last government took office. The people of western Canada, the wheat pool, the farmers and the grain trade refused to sell that wheat at a price. It has been stated that that is not a fact, but anybody who knows the operation of the grain trade and the handling of grain on the exchanges knows that, if wheat is quoted at \$1.50 a bushel, and wheat is offered at that price, so long as wheat is offered at that price it never will rise above that quotation.

In the fall of 1929 wheat was quoted on the Winnipeg grain exchange for the October option at \$1.73 per bushel. At the same time cash buyers of wheat were offering a nine cent premium for wheat. In other words this meant that \$1.82 a bushel was offered for cash wheat at that time, and the people of this country refused to take that price. I do not blame them for doing so; that was their own business; they were advised by people from one end of Canada to the other that wheat

[Mr. E. E. Perley.]

was worth more than that at that time. Hon. members will probably remember that the president of one of the great banks in this country stated then that wheat was worth more than that. So that when the government of my right hon. friend took over we had a surplus of wheat, not on account of any policy of a past government but because we in this country refused to sell wheat at a price of \$1.50 a bushel and over.

Then prices started to fall, and throughout the five years that my hon. friend held office he put into effect in Canada policies that acted as a block to the sale of any wheat or grain or practically any other primary product from this country. At that time tariffs were jacked up, first of all on the schedules, then by devious methods of valuations for duty purposes, different discount rates, dump duties and everything else. Naturally our primary producers, in shipping their products, could not bring back their wages across the boundaries in return for the commodities that they shipped out. It was these policies which held back our wheat and other grains until, in the fall of 1932, Canadian wheat reached the lowest price at which it had been sold since we started to grow wheat. I remember in that fall selling my crop of No. 1 hard wheat at twenty-five cents per bushel at my point of shipment. I remember in that fall selling No. 1 northwest Canadian flax with a three cent premium and getting fifty-one cents per bushel for it. That is what happened to the farmer in this country while my right hon. friend piled tariff upon tariff to stop the incoming of payments to the Canadian farmer for these goods which he had to sell. Then, having got the country into that shape, he brought from Calgary Mr. John I. McFarland to endeavour to sell the wheat of Canada against the tremendous obstacles that he himself had put in the way of selling that wheat.

Mr. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, when the hon. gentleman makes a statement so entirely at variance with the facts I think I must correct it. Mr. McFarland was not brought by the government; he was engaged by the Co-operative Wheat Producers, and that is a matter of record. I am bound to say that the other observations of the speaker are on the same level.

Mr. ROSS (Moose Jaw): I may have been incorrect when I said that my right hon. friend brought John I. McFarland from Calgary. Probably my right hon. friend will say that he had nothing whatever to do with the appointment of Mr. John I. McFarland?