

Hon. Mr. CRERAR: I have said enough, I think, to indicate to honourable senators that I am not at all enamoured of this agreement. As a matter of fact, I do not think the agreement will ever come into effect.

Hon. Mr. HAIG: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. CRERAR: I say that for this reason. The United States Senate, after having had the matter under consideration for some little time, failed to ratify the agreement. There is hope that the Senate will ratify it, but I venture to think that in the light of existing political conditions in the United States there is not a very good chance of ratification by the United States Senate.

Hon. Mr. DAVIES: As one who knows nothing about either the growing or the marketing of wheat, but is very interested in this debate, may I ask the honourable gentleman what he suggests as an alternative to this agreement?

Hon. Mr. CRERAR: First I want to continue my remarks. I have just pointed out that up to the present time the United States have not ratified the agreement. Australia has ratified, but its ratification is conditional upon ratification by the United States. Personally I should like to have seen in this agreement a provision of that kind applying to Canada, although I do not know that it matters a great deal. Certainly, if the United States fail to give ratification, the agreement will fall by the wayside.

The question raised by my honourable friend from Kingston (Hon. Mr. Davies) is an interesting one, but let me ask this: Can we in the long run treat wheat any differently from any other commodity? It may be approaching heresy to ask that; but I have always believed that through the development of their co-operative organizations the wheat producers, particularly those in the West, could cut the cost of marketing to the lowest possible point. They could, if they wished, ultimately control the marketing of wheat. Indeed, with the power that they have got they could, if properly organized, do that today.

I think, too, that our wheat producers need to pay a great deal more attention than in the past to the costs of producing wheat; and in those costs I include efficiency in management and sound farming practice as two of the important factors. In the future are we going to the subsidizing of wheat? I do not know. But I think that if we enter upon that pathway it will lead us to a great deal of trouble. I am one of those who believe that a government cannot play favourites. You cannot hold an umbrella over wheat

without holding it over oats and barley; nor over grain and not over livestock; nor over grain and livestock and not over fruit. The danger is that if we start in that direction we shall become enmeshed in a system of government controls, and that finally the government will have to assume all control over all production and tell every producer what he has to do. That is something that I hope will never happen in this country.

I am afraid that I have spoken rather discursively. I do not think this agreement will amount to anything. In the end it will probably be about as successful as the fabled pursuit of the Holy Grail, sought after by many earnest men, but always without avail.

Hon. FRED W. GERSHAW: Honourable senators, I realize that those who have already spoken in this debate are much more competent to speak on the wheat question than I am, but there are a few points that have not as yet been brought out. In the first place, representatives of thirty-six countries gathered to make this agreement, and I think we must assume that each representative had his country's welfare at heart. And while there has been a good deal of criticism of the prices fixed for wheat, I think we must take it for granted that our representatives got written into the agreement the best prices that it was possible for them to obtain. It is of course unfortunate that Russia and Argentina, wheat exporting countries, are not parties to the agreement. For as long as I can remember, the wheat producers and officials of their organizations have been dissatisfied with the methods of marketing grain. They have always felt that unduly large profits were made by the handlers of grain—by speculators if you will—on the grain exchange, and that the producers did not get a fair reward for their work. As the honourable senator from Churchill (Hon. Mr. Crerar) pointed out, for fifteen years they have been advocating international agreements as means of stabilizing the wheat price. They have argued that agreements fixing prices for certain defined periods would be advantageous alike to selling countries and buying countries. The honourable gentleman recalled having sold wheat for as little as 17 and 26 cents a bushel at the place of production. Other ruinously low prices have obtained from time to time, and I take it that the agreement before us represents a sincere effort to fix ceiling and floor prices for our exportable surplus of wheat over the next five years, so that during that period our producers may be able to look forward to some measure of stability.