

Supply—Agriculture

When the delegation from St. Boniface came to my office I spoke to them about that and they urged me to mention it at the first opportunity and that is why I am raising this question tonight. When the delegation appeared before the committee on agriculture I referred to that point as well. Mr. Harry Marsh of Saskatchewan who had at one time been a director of the wheat pool agreed that if the march had taken place in 1946 it would have been possible for the farmers to obtain at that time what they are seeking now.

I am really surprised that the farmers did not march on Ottawa in 1946 when the Liberal party of that day without any authority and without consultation with the western farmers confiscated part of their income from wheat. It was really a conscription of wealth directed only against the three western provinces.

This afternoon I heard the leader of the C.C.F. party talking about the interests of the western farmers being betrayed by the policies of the Conservative party but the greatest betrayal occurred in 1946 at which time the C.C.F. and Liberal parties worked hand in hand. Mr. Coldwell admitted that he had given some approval to that agreement at that time.

It seems to me that hon. members of the C.C.F. were not concerned at all about the interests of the western farmer. They were concerned only in bringing about an enforced plan and fixed prices and government interference with the affairs of the western farmer. They did not consider what losses the western farmers were taking at that time.

I am surprised that Mr. Wesson, who I understand was also a leader of the wheat pool in 1946, did not look after the interests of the farmers then. Perhaps the organized march on Ottawa was caused by remorse or perhaps he is now repentant for what he did to the farmers in 1946. I am quite surprised that the leader of the C.C.F. party at this time is not interested in asking any questions about the British wheat agreement or about the stand that party took at that time.

Mr. Harkness: He does not like to hear about it.

Mr. Regnier: Yes, indeed. I would invite him to explain the participation of his party in that agreement and tell the committee why they did not try to lead a march on Ottawa at that time when one was required. At that time there was no farmers' union organized in western Canada. Indeed, the very reason for the organization of the farmers' union in the western provinces was that the interests of the farmers were not being properly looked after by the C.C.F. or by the wheat pool organization. The farmers saw the necessity of having another organization and thus established the farmers' union. Personally I am

sorry they were not organized before they were. If that had been done what took place in 1946 could have been prevented. Such a thing has never happened to any other class in Canada. No other group has had part of the income from its produce confiscated and given away to another country with the cost of the gift being charged only to one class, namely the wheat growers of the three prairie provinces.

The province of Ontario was exempted. In some years that province has grown as much wheat as the province of Manitoba. Why was not the province of Ontario included? Obviously they knew they could not get away with it for political reasons and therefore it was limited to the three prairies provinces and to only one class. I believe this represented a mortal blow struck at the western farmer. In the course of a few years \$500 million was taken away from them. I have taken this figure from Honourable T. A. Crerar who was a member of the Liberal cabinet at one time but who did not approve of it after he ceased to be in the cabinet. He said so in Winnipeg on January 24, 1953, at a Liberal convention, of all places.

In 1946 that great newspaper of western Canada, the *Winnipeg Free Press*, put up a wonderful fight against the policy of the Liberal party at that time and in defence of the interests of the three western provinces.

I was quite shocked last week when I heard the hon. member for Essex East expressing concern for what was happening at this time to the western farmer. Why did he not show equal concern when his administration was in office at which time he had some authority and power to protect the wheat growers of western Canada?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Chairman, would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Regnier: Certainly.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): In 1946 did not the hon. member share with me and with many other Liberals a strong faith and belief in the Liberal party as an active member of the Liberal party at that time?

Mr. Regnier: Mr. Chairman, I do not think I shall ever live down the shame of it. I remember the great Liberal party of 1946. I had a great deal to do with it. From 1946, except for the last two or three years, I attended Liberal conventions and particularly the Liberal convention in Winnipeg, and made it a point to attend the committee on agriculture where I attacked the Liberal government's policy on agriculture, particularly in regard to the international wheat agreement and the British wheat agreement and this had a great deal to do with my leaving the Liberal party.

[Mr. Regnier.]