

Supply—Trade and Commerce

policy since it took office on June 21, 1957. I believe that omission was an improper way of treating the public business of this country particularly when we remember that trade is so highly vital to Canada and has such a direct and immediate effect on employment. I was particularly pleased, therefore, to hear the minister today, as I said, at long last come forward with a comprehensive statement on this subject.

The minister spoke about the many aspects of trade. As a matter of fact I thought he was slightly apologetic at the opening for the length of his remarks. I must say he has no need whatever to apologize for the length of his speech on a subject as important as this. We have been waiting for this statement for some 13 months and we welcome it. The minister is to be congratulated for having come forward with it at long last.

Trade is a wide ranging subject and perhaps in making a statement on the first item of the Departmental estimates it is necessary to approach it in a general way and at times be guilty of some generalities in which one would not always wish to engage. Last evening I was interested in examining what was done last year with respect to this subject. The estimates were introduced but there was only some brief discussion on item No. 1 and nothing further was done about the estimates prior to dissolution of the house and therefore, unfortunately, the house was denied the opportunity to examine this subject.

The minister in his brief statement on that occasion did not deal with the subject of trade at all other than to make a very short reference to Canada's excellent foreign trade service. I am very happy to join with him in those congratulatory remarks to the foreign trade service of this country. I believe we have a splendid foreign trade service serving Canada. One has only to deal with commercial matters and attend conferences on trade or finance matters with other governments to appreciate what a highly efficient and fine foreign trade service Canada has. My hope is that during his term of office the minister will support that trade service and continue to treat it in such a way as to enable it to occupy the prominent position it now occupies in our public service.

In looking at the figures it is interesting to see the expansion of our trade in those postwar years. In 1946, our imports were some \$1,927 million, and our exports some \$2,339 million, making a total trade of \$4,266 million. By 1956 the trade had increased so that those figures for the year 1956 were: imports, \$5,711,700,000; exports, \$4,862,900,000;

or a total trade of \$10,574,600,000, a tremendous expansion, placing us in the fourth position among the traders of the world.

I think the minister will agree with me that when he took over the portfolio our trade, as a trading nation, was indeed in a very healthy state. There were problems, some serious problems, but generally speaking it was in a very healthy state. There had been a tremendous expansion of trade. I think he will also agree that when he took over his department it was a well-staffed, well-managed department, and it had a degree of esprit de corps and efficiency that would commend it to him.

He spoke about the trade pattern as we now see it, and I should like to make some comment on his remarks. There is undoubtedly a good deal of uneasiness about international trade at this time owing to several world forces which will be readily apparent to hon. members, some of which should be mentioned in particular here. But before doing that I would like to make some reference to some parts of the minister's speech.

I noted with interest his reference to the wheat exports for this year, 1958, being an increase over the year 1957. I think he will see, if he will check his own speeches in *Hansard*, where he referred to some of the factors entering into that, in the last session of parliament and he did not mention them today at all. He did mention one factor entering into it, namely the higher protein content of Canadian wheat, and he did mention something about European wheat production. But he did not tell us anything about the Australian crop failure last year and the sharp reduction in the Argentine production last year. It seems to me that if the House of Commons is to discuss a matter as vital as this to our economy, all these factors should be put forward by the responsible minister. We all realize and we are glad that wheat exports are up, but no useful purpose is being served in discussing the subject if we omit all the relative data and the reasons for the increase.

Then, there is the matter of beef and meat exports, particularly to the United States.

Mr. McIntosh: Will the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. McLraith: Yes.

Mr. McIntosh: Will he touch on the question why Canada had 40 per cent of the wheat market prior to world war I and has only 25 per cent of the world market now?

Mr. McLraith: I am sorry; I did not get the question. I will come back to the question and deal with it when I can get the point; I am sorry, I did not get it.