

*The Address—Mr. Low*

deteriorate unless some very quick action is taken to get it under cover. There is a good deal of it that will have to be conditioned in elevators that have drying facilities. Every day I receive letters from my part of the country telling about the distress caused the farmers in that part of the country, since they are not able to deliver their grain because the elevators are full and no shipments are being made from the elevators at the head of the lakes. Farmers generally are not able to market enough of their produce to pay their harvesting costs, let alone their grocery bills or supply and repair bills which have been accumulating during the year.

As a consequence the retail merchants have been carrying a tremendous amount of credit on their books to help the farmers. I am advised by good authority that many of the retail merchants are in a precarious position today as a result of the extreme amount of credit they have had to carry. Many of them are fearful that they will have to fold up or will crack under the strain unless some relief is afforded them. It is too bad these unsecured creditors, the retail merchants, have to be subjected to so much strain every time a crisis arises in our economy, but that is what happens.

The farmers of the country are asking, and they are justified in so doing, that some plan be worked out whereby they can receive payment for grain properly stored on the farm. So far as I can see little or nothing is being done along these lines by the government. Today I listened to the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe) assure the house that the matter is under continuous study. I am expressing the hope tonight that something will be worked out very soon, because the farmers are certainly in need. It seems to me that if we had any appreciation at all of the situation that is presently facing our farmers; if we realized that without a prosperous agriculture there can be no continued prosperity in Canada, we would get busy and provide some means by which the farmers could realize substantially on their crops, thus relieving the conditions of distress under which many thousands of them are now labouring.

I am convinced that this government has been very largely responsible for the fact that we have accumulated vast surpluses of food materials in this country during a time when millions of people in other lands were hungry and in need. There has been a potential market for every pound of food that Canada has produced, and every effort should have been made over the years to get that food into the stomachs of the hungry and

needy people wherever they happened to be. Certainly there is no excuse whatever for anyone in Canada having too little food. Any government worthy of the name "enlightened" or "Christian" would see to it that our home market at least was properly supplied so there would be no vestige of human suffering or want in our own land.

Of course, our first responsibility is to our own people; that is admitted. If we looked after our own people as they deserve to be looked after, many of the so-called surpluses would disappear overnight. It takes only a small increase in per capita consumption to make many surpluses that appear quite formidable disappear in a short time. This government's trading policies have contributed to the present crisis that faces agriculture in Canada. By getting into the Bretton Woods agreement in 1945 and adhering rigidly to it since that time, the government has seriously limited trade with other countries, especially in food materials. I know they can produce figures to show that the volume of our trade was never greater. That is probably correct; but in this, as in so many other things, it is not so much what the situation is as what it might be if we were following different policies.

Two or three years ago the world food and agriculture organization called upon the farmers of the world to go all out in their productive efforts, because that organization said an over-all increase of no less than 5 per cent in food production would be necessary if the hungry people of the world were to be fed at just the minimum level for health and well-being.

The farmers responded nobly to that appeal. But when the food was produced it backed up in the American economy into huge surpluses, and people of many lands went on starving. Moreover, increased production has been used as an excuse for depressing agricultural prices, as a consequence of which farmers have suffered a very serious decline in farm income during the last year.

When the farmers appealed to the government for some assistance in finding a solution to their problem, the only answer they got was, "Well, you are producing too much; cut back your production as a means of holding up your prices". That answer is not good enough in times like these, when communism is all too ready to fatten on the discontent and misery of people everywhere. An answer like this to the farmers indicates a total bankruptcy of ideas about how to handle the situation that faces us. One would expect a different answer. One might be reasonable in expecting something really worth while from