

seas at prices not higher than the current export price now prevailing of \$1.55 a bushel, basis No. 1 northern, Fort William, Port Arthur or Vancouver. One dollar a bushel means approximately eighty cents net to the producers on the prairies, which is considerably below cost of production for the average producer, while during the early stages of this war we asked for at least \$1.25 a bushel. That was on the basis of pre-war parity. Since then, the cost of living to farmers has risen approximately twenty per cent and implements of production now cost twenty per cent more than at that time. Farm labour wages have doubled. I have no complaint about that. In the last parliament on several occasions I asked that the same consideration be given farm labourers as was given organized labour and I wish it to be clearly understood where I stand on that point. Yet, instead of increasing the floor price in keeping with the cost, the government to-day, by order in council and while parliament is in session, have reduced the floor price by another twenty per cent.

I well remember a few sessions ago the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner), speaking on the question of the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act, stated that it was his desire to see a family on every half-section of land. I think he will realize that a family on a half-section cannot produce wheat for approximately eighty cents a bushel net. More than that, this will be a very live issue for those members of the armed services now returning who wish to settle on the land.

With respect to cost, I used the chart which was prepared in the last parliament by the department of the Minister of Agriculture. Reference was made this evening to the difficulties the western farmers had in marketing their wheat during 1932. During that same year one of the minister's departmental officials, Doctor Hopkins, an able civil servant, conducted a survey throughout the western prairies, picking out individual farmers and experimental farms. As a result of those findings he prepared his chart. He proved conclusively by those findings that on a quarter-section a man with five horses, threshing hired, had a cost of \$1.02 a bushel to produce wheat at eighteen bushels to the acre, which is away above the average of Canadian production. On a half-section the cost to a man with seven horses was 73.5 cents; in the case of a man with a fifteen horsepower tractor and two horses the cost was a little under that, or 66.5 cents; in the case of one section and two men with fourteen horses, the cost was 77 cents.

I do not think I should take up the time of the house in putting that chart on the

[Mr. J. A. Ross.]

record; I did so in the last parliament. But these findings by the minister's own department proved conclusively that the most economical farm to operate was the two-section farm, and the official in question investigated farms from a quarter-section up to three sections of land operated with tractors and horses.

Under mass production you can produce wheat cheaper per bushel, but certainly not on a half-section. You must have mass production. In the year prior to the declaration of war a survey was conducted throughout Saskatchewan by the professor in charge of farm management at Saskatoon university. His finding was that, taking into account the cost of production and interest, those people had to have ninety cents a bushel for wheat produced at fourteen bushels to the acre, and that was then a higher production figure than the average prevailing throughout that section of the country.

More than that, there was a chart prepared by Mr. Lattimore, a professor at Macdonald agricultural college, setting forth the acreage of farms by individuals in some of the principal countries at the outbreak of the war in 1939. In Canada the acreage was seventy-six acres on the average; the United States, fifty acres; Great Britain, 30.5; Ireland, 17; Denmark, 14.7; Norway, 14.7; Spain, 12; Sweden, 11.4; Switzerland, 11.9; France, 10; Poland, 5.7; Italy, 5.2.

I think that should be conclusive proof that the minister's desire cannot be realized with the floor price which he has suggested. During the first years of the war, when we were pleading with the government year after year to set at least on a basis of parity \$1.25 a bushel for wheat in this country, the *Winnipeg Free Press*, which conducts the most partisan editorial page of any newspaper in Canada and which I have never seen taking the part of the western agriculturist, chastized, in an editorial during that time the then hon. member for Qu'Appelle, Mr. Perley, the hon. member for Battle River (Mr. Fair), and the member for Souris, myself, for asking for blood money at the expense of the servicemen when we requested an initial price of \$1.25 a bushel. When, later on, the government acceded and set the initial price at \$1.25, according to the *Free Press* it was a different story. It was not then a case of blood money; there was no criticism of anything that this government under the present Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) might do in Canada.

Speaking in this house yesterday on the question of meat for overseas, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Ilsley), as reported at page 394 of *Hansard* of September 24, stated: