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Mr. W. F. Cockshutt in House Re-affirms Former Position for Control of the Food Prices

Makes a Proposal Far More Radical Than That of Any Liberal Member—Summary of the Debate on the Subject

Ottawa, May 4.—Dietatorial control of food prices in Canada with an embargo on the export of foodstuffs was openly advocated in the House of Commons yesterday during the course of an all-day discussion that developed at times into bitter personalities. Incidentally it furnished the House with a surprise when W. F. Cockshutt, Conservative member for Brantford, broke away from the Government with a proposal for price control far more radical than any member on the Liberal side ventured to make.

The debate was started by G. W. Kyte, member for Richmond, who moved the adjournment of the House to refer to the abnormal increase in the price of flour. Mr. Kyte wanted the Government to commandeer all wheat now in farmers' hands, and then require the millers to mill it at reasonable prices. Sir Thomas White, in the course of an able address, in which he pointed out the insuperable difficulties in the way of such a course of action, intimated that Sir George Foster, now in Washington, was discussing with American authorities the whole question of food production and price regulation in order to find a basis for international action. The Liberal members fought shy of any declaration that might make things uncomfortable for them in the Western grain-growing provinces, but Hon. Arthur Meighen fully drew from D. D. McKenney, of North Cape Breton, an admission that he favored an embargo on wheat.

It was Mr. Cockshutt who first supported prohibition of export as a regulation of prices. The Brantford member was on the same ground as he took two years ago, when he brought in a resolution asking for control of food prices. Half a dozen members on each side of the House participated in the debate, which was not wound up at 10:30 o'clock, when the motion to adjourn was defeated.

Undue Profits from Flour.
In moving the adjournment of the House Mr. Kyte referred to the wild speculation in the wheat markets yesterday, accompanied by an advance of \$1.20 in the price of flour. He declared that the advance in flour was out of all proportion to the increase in the price of wheat, and that the millers were simply using the speculative market in Winnipeg as an excuse for making further undue profits out of the consuming public.

"This flour, which is quoted yesterday at \$14.50, was manufactured from wheat which the millers have had for many months," declared the Richmond member, "and according to reliable reports they have a sufficient amount of wheat on hand to provide the flour required for three or four months."

Hon. Thomas Crothers "made a brief reply. He announced that for some time the officers of his department had been collecting statistics and other information in regard to the flour market and that immediately upon learning of yesterday's sharp advance in prices he had instructed one of the commissioners of the department, Mr. O'Connor, to proceed at once to Montreal and investigate.

Scarcity of Wheat.
"He will investigate to see what can be done to remedy the existing scarcity," he said. "Whatever steps are found advisable to be taken by the Government will be taken," said the minister.

The Minister of Labor read to the House statistics to show the tremendous scarcity of wheat throughout the world, and to demonstrate the fact that the increase in flour prices only corresponded to the advance in wheat.

W. F. Carroll, of Cape Breton, declared that the government was doing a lot of "investigating" but was doing nothing to improve matters. "If they do nothing to remedy the evil the time will come in the not distant future when the consumers will be in a position where they will be able to remedy that fully," was his veiled reference to a coming election.

Dr. Edwards of Frontenac, wanted to know whether Mr. Carroll was in favor of commandeering wheat at the present prices. After some hesitation the Cape Breton member said he would, which led Dr. Edwards to point out that at the present prices wheat made into flour would offer no relief from the present high rate.

Mr. Carroll held that this did not affect his argument since the chief point for attention was the fact that the millers who were charging \$14.50 for flour had made that flour from wheat for which they had paid only \$1.60 to \$1.70 months ago.

Farmers Grain Speculators.
W. H. Bennett, of East Simcoe, when peace had been restored, stated that the price of wheat was guided by speculation, and the Government could do nothing in that regard. Every farmer was a grain speculator. He challenged the opposition to make a straight motion to commandeer the wheat of Canada.

"If the Opposition did so, the members from Ontario on the Opposition side of the House would certainly leave the chamber rather than vote for it," he declared.

Sir Thomas White stated that it was a good thing the matter had been brought up. This was a time when the government should be sub-

ject to criticism, but the criticism should be fair.

"If there is a reason for the high cost of living the government will endeavor to deal with it," he said. "We have no right to sit here and say that the government is responsible for this war, and the Government has no reason for self-depreciation."

Shortage in Labor.

Sir Thomas stated that if they were to apply Mr. Kyte's remedy, namely, to commandeer wheat, which was now at \$3 a bushel, the Government would have to raise \$200,000,000. "The world is at war," stated the Minister, "with the result that there is a shortage in labor, which means an increase in wages, which again means an increase in the cost of every agricultural product. The price of capital and interest has gone up and cultivation is not as good as it was before."

Canada, said the Finance Minister, could not be compared with England, because the former was an exporting country, while the latter was an importing country. It was easy to commandeer supplies in an importing country. The factors in the high cost of living were world causes over which no government had any control. As far as Canada was concerned, said Sir Thomas, there never had been a time when there was less distress and less unemployment. If there were combines in the country it was a different matter. As far as the farmer was concerned, the Finance Minister said, that in his opinion the farmer would farm when he gets a world price and not an artificial price for his products. It should also be remembered that the cost of labor in farming had gone up.

Mr. Turfitt asked if the Government had not fixed a price on the wheat crop three or four weeks ago. Sir Thomas White: "The Government did not attempt to buy the wheat crop of this country at all, and the honorable member knows it."

Sir George Foster passed on the subject to the West for his wheat crop (government applause). The Finance Minister reiterated that the farmer was entitled to a fair deal. He would like to see a man make a fair profit and if there was no monopoly more harm than good was done when the Government interfered.

Mr. E. M. McDonald asked if it was not a fact that legislation had been introduced in the United States Congress fixing a price for foodstuffs.

One of the very questions being discussed by Sir George Foster is in connection with this subject, stated Sir Thomas.

Sir Thomas advanced as one explanation for the fluctuations in Winnipeg, the fact that the British Commission had purchased so much wheat that the margin left was much narrower than the usual.

"If we commandeer all the wheat in this country," he said, "most of the wheat we would commandeer is wheat owned by the British government, and bought by the British government for the purpose of maintaining the people of Great Britain."

The Finance Minister agreed that the question was a serious one, but he maintained that the opposition was dealing with it in an unfair partisan and flippant manner.

Mr. Cockshutt.
In March 1915, he had moved a resolution himself, asking the government to exercise control over food and regulate prices. He was in accord with the position taken by the Liberal resolution. A country at war could not expect to get along with the same regulations as sufficed in peace time. The war had upset the calculations of the many political economists. There were 7,000,000 workmen in Brantford, who considered this question to be the most important before the country at the present time. They were not asking the government to do anything that had not already been done in every other war country but Canada. Even in the United States, which had been at war less than a month, a Food Dictator had been appointed. Canada should have a Food Dictator, not a despot or a Czar, but someone who would point out to the people that sacrifices were expected during war that would not be asked in peace.

Mr. Cockshutt replied to the Finance Minister by saying that to argue that supply and demand must regulate prices was to "beg the question." "What we need at the present time," said the Brantford member, "is more vigorous action. Kid-glove methods are no longer of any use. I say this also with regard to recruiting. We must give a lead to the people, and the people will follow the lead given."

There were 900,000 workmen in Canada exclusive of farmers, according to the last census. "Are they exercised about the price of food?" asked Mr. Cockshutt. I say they are, and in the near future the Government or some other Government must take into account the food prices in Canada and do something to regulate them. We have been living in a fool's paradise. We must bear our share of the war, and the man's burden in the way a white man should. Prices can be controlled—they are being controlled in every other country in the world, and they can be controlled in Canada."

Mr. Cockshutt turned suddenly on Hon. Mr. Crothers, the Minister of Labor. "I just overheard Mr.

Soldiers Wives and Mothers

A meeting of the Soldiers Wives & Mothers' Association of Terrace Hill, was held in the Shenstone Memorial Baptist Church Hall on Thursday afternoon at 3 o'clock.

There was a good attendance and the meeting was opened by the singing of the national anthem. The president, Mrs. J. Hamilton, presiding. The minutes of the previous meeting were read by the secretary, Mrs. J. Withers, and the work left over from the last meeting satisfactorily concluded.

A committee of two was appointed to visit the sick members, there being quite a number in the district. Mrs. Dunsdon and Mrs. Willis were the two ladies elected. After the business was concluded a pleasant time was spent by all present while the fingers were busy knitting and sewing.

A quantity of Red Cross work has been distributed by the president and all are working in a very enthusiastic manner. The meeting closed with the singing of the Doxology.

honorably friend ask how much I would reduce the price of ploughs," he declared. "The Minister can have ploughs at his own price. I have not dealt in them for twenty years. My honorable friend should have whispered so loud, 'too loud.' (Opposition applause.) I have simply been trying to give the Minister some suggestions, and he resorts to 'ploughs'."

Mr. Cockshutt added that it gave him a good deal of pain to have to dissent from his fellow-Conservative members, but in this time of war every other country had done Canada could do. If heroism at home was half as great as that of the boys over the water there would be no necessity for talking as he had had to talk.

Challenges Call for Compulsion.
Hon. Arthur Meighen, in referring to Mr. Cockshutt's proposal of a food dictatorship, and similar recommendations from the Opposition members, declared that those who favored compulsion in either civil or military life had better come out and say so. There was too much faint-heartedness in all proposals.

There was a disposition to eulogize the United States, but it was absurd to condemn Canada on the strength of the introduction of a bill at Washington. Lord Northcliffe had entered the war to look to Canada as an example, while Theodore Roosevelt had stated that Canada had shown to the world what could be done by voluntary service.

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Amend Chinese Immigration

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