

Prairie Farm Assistance

the Turgeon report, there was a profit of nine and one-half million dollars. I shall read the paragraph:

I have already shown how this stabilization wheat was finally disposed of by the Canadian wheat board at a net profit of \$9,628,881.23 after four years of disastrously small crops.

And over at page 38, without going into the matter in detail, the commissioner divides that amount up in such a way as to indicate that there was much more than that made. In fact, it looks like \$25,000,000.

However, I submit this—and it is critical of the present government—that the profit would have been much greater if there had not been such a hurry to dispose of the wheat in 1935, by what has been described as a “fire sale.”

The final act of the Conservative government was to set up the wheat board, and the price of wheat was fixed at 87½ cents. That wheat board is still maintained, and the government is supporting the policy which we set up.

While the minister to-night was most generous in his statements about the late Conservative government, and while I do not wish to misquote him, I would point out that he and many of his colleagues have not been so generous in the past. They were very critical, both when we were bringing in legislation, and after that legislation was in effect. I should not like to be unfair to the minister, but I have seen him quoted on many occasions as being much less generous than he was to-night.

In addition to that legislation for the western farmer, between 1930 and 1935 we passed amendments to the Canadian Farm Loan Act; we passed the Natural Products Marketing Act, the Farmers' Creditors Arrangement Act, and provided for seed grain. Those are examples of other legislation which was useful to the west. But the assistance we gave to the wheat growers was the big item. We showed plainly during our term of office, beyond contradiction by any fair-minded person, that we appreciated the difficulties of the western farmer, and we courageously put into effect plans to deal with those difficulties. Our plans succeeded. I wish to say now that if and when in power again we will work out plans just to the west and just to all Canada.

In the legislation proposed at the present time, in these three or four bills of which the minister has spoken, to a large extent the plans we proposed, with the exception of the wheat board, are jettisoned. The board is being kept on, but the stabilization at a

[Mr. Manion.]

price is removed. It is true that a few weeks ago the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Euler) suggested a 60-cent initial price. Now it is raised to 70 cents. In view of the changes which have been taking place, one finds himself asking if in the near future there will not be further changes. However, I imagine the government is now going to stick to the 70-cent price, plus an acreage bonus. I hope that for the good of Canada generally, and for the west in particular, the arrangement will be successful. I admit at once that the minister has given long study to this question. He has been a farmer, and he should know that of which he speaks. However, I do question the wisdom of originally speaking of a 60-cent initial price, and now emphasizing a 70-cent price. The reason is that there is a danger that the world in general will accept the 70-cent price as the valuation which the Canadian people put upon No. 1 northern Canadian wheat at Fort William. I submit that is one of the dangers of this legislation.

Mr. GARDINER: I have been attempting in every way possible to have everyone who speaks on this question use the term “advance.” I do not think it is a price. It has never been set as a price, but is simply an advance paid. I do not think the word “price” should be used.

Mr. MANION: I say the minister should have thought of that before he drew up the bill, because it is not described as an “advance” in the bill. It is called a “fixed price.” As a matter of fact, it had been spoken of as an initial price. However, the minister should have thought of that earlier. Over on the explanatory page I find the expression “such fixed price per bushel, according to grade or quality or place of delivery.” That is in the explanatory note, drafted by the government itself. Then paragraph (e) reads:

... a sum certain per bushel, basis in store at Fort William.

The explanatory note says:

... such fixed price per bushel, according to grade or quality or place of delivery.

“Price” is the word used in drawing up the bill. I heard with great interest the minister discuss the cost of producing wheat as being between 30 and 40 cents a bushel, and he quoted certain professors to that effect.

Mr. CRERAR: I understand my hon. friend is referring to the amendment to the Canadian Wheat Board Act. Section 3 makes it perfectly clear that the 70 cents is an initial payment.