

No country could have a better potential asset than these stores of wheat. But in the meantime we may have to go through a difficult period, and we should not ask the farmer to carry the whole load. He is willing to do his share. In days gone by, he has done more than his share, by taking the greater part of the burden of the depression. He should not be required to accept all the burden of the economic dislocation contingent upon the war.

Mr. ROSS (Souris): Mr. Chairman, like the previous speaker I am disappointed that we have had to wait until this late date for a statement by the government on a matter of such importance as that of wheat in this country. In the minister's statement yesterday he pointed out that there is now estimated to be in sight a crop of over 400,000,000 bushels, which will be harvested off a seeded acreage of some 28,000,000 acres. If that be so, which I rather doubt—I believe that estimate will be greatly reduced, due to certain climatic conditions at present taking place throughout the west—most certainly it will create a difficult marketing problem. As was well pointed out by the minister, we have at present available storage space for about 150,000,000 to 160,000,000 bushels of wheat.

It may not be generally realized that there are on the prairies 290,000 farmers. Their crop must be harvested, and a quota must be set up for marketing this crop. On these 290,000 farms it would be approximately 500 bushels per farm. The minister stated that the producer will be paid 70 cents a bushel, basis No. 1 Fort William. That will net the farmer approximately 52 cents a bushel. By ready calculation hon. members will see that the farmer will receive the sum of \$260, out of which must be paid his harvesting expenses, and he must also maintain his family through the winter and pay his taxes out of that meagre sum. As the hon. member for Weyburn (Mr. Douglas) pointed out, the first charge must be the expenses of the family in producing the crop, because they must get their livelihood. That is the prior claim, and there will be considerable difficulty between the farmer and his creditors during the coming season.

A large percentage of the farmers on the prairies to-day are tenant farmers. I might give a few statistics with regard to my own province, Manitoba, given by Premier Bracken. There are in that province 57,000 farmers of whom one-third work mortgaged land. The land mortgages in the province total \$60,000,000, and the average price of wheat in the last ten years, with the exception of two, has been about one-half of what it was ten years ago.

The income of the Manitoba farmers, he said, had been reduced by about \$250,000,000. It used to be that a bin full of wheat was considered money in the bank for the farmers of western Canada; it was as good as gold. That is not so to-day. The farmers wheat dollar, according to reports published by the Searle Grain Company, is worth only 57 cents to-day. I have here a short article issued on July 18 of this year with reference to the farmer's wheat dollar. Let me quote:

The Searle Index of the price of "Things farmers buy" (147 items), now stands at 134, 1913-14 equals 100, which means that these things cost farmers in the west at the present time 34 per cent more than they did in 1914 before the great war. The price of wheat—No. 1 northern—as of June 18, basis the open market price, is now 23 per cent lower than it was in 1913-14. This means therefore that a bushel of wheat in western Canada now has a purchasing power in relation to "The things farmers buy" of 57 per cent in comparison with the purchasing power of 100 that it had before the war.

As to the seriousness of the situation which has been pointed out by members from Saskatchewan, there was held in that province during the past month a conference of pool representatives to discuss the marketing of grain, and as a result of this conference they are urging upon the government of Saskatchewan the passing of a moratorium. The resolution reads:

Whereas the necessity for a full contribution by western agriculture to the Canadian effort toward successful prosecution of the war should be fully realized and whereas this effort will be seriously hampered unless the producers are permitted to retain some adequate returns from their labours;

Be it resolved that we request our provincial government to declare a moratorium for the duration of the war or until farm products reach a parity price with other commodities.

Those attending the conference included A. D. Sproule, first vice-president of the Saskatchewan wheat pool, who reviewed problems facing agriculture in the west and said their solution would mean the solution of problems of the entire Canadian agricultural community of 5,000,000 persons.

The minister yesterday said that there would be a processing tax of 15 cents a bushel for domestic consumption to take effect in Canada immediately. He said that this should not alter the price of bread to the consumer on that basis. I know there will be some argument as to whether that will be the actual effect, but if it does alter the price I am satisfied that it will not change the price beyond one-quarter of a cent per pound of bread at the outside. This matter was thoroughly discussed at a meeting which was held in Winnipeg to consider the marketing