

Supply—Trade and Commerce

bring my hon. friend's question to his attention. I am not in a position to make an estimate; and for the reasons which the Minister of Trade and Commerce gave this afternoon, I do not believe any other minister is. All I can do is to bring my hon. friend's question to the attention of the minister, and he will try to deal with it tomorrow.

Mr. Argue: Would the Minister of Agriculture not care to make a guess?

Mr. Gardiner: This is not a matter which is under my department at all. It is a matter which is under the Department of Trade and Commerce and always has been. The statement has been made by the Minister of Trade and Commerce.

Mr. Green: Here is the Minister of Trade and Commerce coming into the chamber now.

Mr. Howe: In reply to the hon. member's question, the substance of which has been conveyed to me by my colleague, may I say that I have no idea.

Mr. Argue: I cannot accept that statement. In the past the Minister of Trade and Commerce has never been bashful about making forecasts. The wheat board is under his department, and I am sure he knows its financial position today and can make a reasonably good estimate of what the final payment will be. I am sure the farmers would like to know. For example, if a farmer over a five-year period had marketed 20,000 bushels of wheat—which is a quantity of wheat that many farmers would have marketed—and if the payment is twenty cents a bushel, the farmer will get another \$4,000; if it is ten cents a bushel, he will get \$2,000. All I am asking is that the minister make an estimate so that the farmers can plan their business this year in the light of the payment they can anticipate.

Mr. Ross (Souris): I should like to follow up this question for just a moment or two, and I will not be long. The other day I had on the order paper a question which had to do with the marketing of the 1949 crop up to date, and I was told that it was not in the public interest to give the trading position along certain lines on which I was asking the question. If that question had been answered as I asked it, we would have been in a position to know fairly closely what the next payment should be, at least; not what it would be, but what it should be. But I was not able to get that information. I think the attitude of the minister at this time is most unfair. I want to ask another question that deals with the item of approximately \$96,000 for administration of delivery quotas and

permit regulations. Has that to do with field inspectors? If it has, I should like to know how many of those there are.

Mr. Howe: No. That is the cost of administering the quota system at the elevators and certain services that the wheat board performs for the Department of Trade and Commerce. There is in the estimates each year a similar item covering expenditures incurred by the board in carrying out the instructions of the department.

Mr. Ross (Souris): I want to ask the minister again if he would not even give me the information?

Mr. Howe: No.

Mr. Ross (Souris): The other information that was refused?

Mr. Howe: No.

Mr. Ross (Souris): It cannot be done?

Mr. Howe: No.

Mr. Quelch: Whilst I appreciate the fact that the minister may not be in a position to state how much money there may be available to pay out in the five-year pool from the wheat board, on the other hand can the minister say whether or not any agreement has been reached with Britain with regard to a final payment on account of the "having regard" clause?

Mr. Howe: No.

Mr. Quelch: If there is no assurance on that point, can the minister say whether or not any decision has been arrived at by the cabinet as to whether or not any payment will be made in compensation for the amount of money lost by the farmers as the result of subsidizing the Canadian consumer and the British consumer during the five-year period?

Mr. Howe: No.

612. To reimburse the Canadian wheat board for the deficit incurred from the operations of the wheat board on the 1948 crop account, flax division, for the period August 1, 1948, to July 31, 1949, pursuant to order in council P.C. 3376 of July 28, 1948, \$3,884,182.

Mr. Ross (Souris): This item has to do with an amount of almost \$4 million on flax account and I think the minister should explain why that is. That also raises another point I want to mention. I had on the order paper a question which was answered at page 833. It had to do with the federal grain elevator at Saskatoon. I have now on the order paper another question asking for much more detailed information; but on the information I received, it cost the government over \$78,000 to operate that elevator last year.