

Supply—Agriculture

I fail to see, however, that this government could provide any reasonable rates at the present time because, as you know, in the last two loans made the cost yield to the government was around 5 per cent. In fact, one of the loans was over 5 per cent, and when you take into account income tax gimmicks in connection with those loans they were up around 6½ per cent. Therefore, I do not see how the government can lend money to farmers at a very reasonable rate when the net cost of money to them was around 6½ per cent. I would hate to think that my credit had fallen so low that I had to pay as much interest as the Minister of Finance had in that last loan. I would appeal to the minister to help our farmers by way of a more reasonable interest rate in order that they might get adequate financing in this highly competitive field of farming.

I must say one thing to the minister. I am sure the fruit and vegetable growers appreciate the longer application of specific duties during the harvest period of the various crops. I do not know how this will apply in the Niagara district, whether it will tend in itself to keep these processing plants open. If it does not I would appeal to this government to do something along with the provincial government of Ontario for the fruit growers.

I also want to say something about the grades of fruit. Our processors have bought grade A fruit from different fruit growers in the past, but when the processors have imported fruit they have accepted a lower grade at a lower price. I think inferior grades have been getting in across the border. Our inspectors let them in. It does not happen any more now than it did with the former government, but it is happening, and I would appeal to the Minister of Agriculture to see that the people in the department at the border admitting fruit and vegetables see that they come up to a definite grade set by our own producers here in Canada.

Mr. Regnier: Mr. Chairman, I am happy to be able to take part in this debate. I would like first to reply to the statement made by the leader of the C.C.F. party to the effect that the Conservative members of western Canada had betrayed the farmers of western Canada. I believe that the greatest betrayal of the farmers took place in 1946 when the British wheat agreement was signed. According to a statement made by Senator T. A. Crerar in 1953 at a Liberal meeting in Winnipeg, the western farmers had lost at that time over \$500 million. In 1946 Mr. Coldwell, the then leader of the C.C.F. party, stated he had given some approval to the British wheat

agreement. There was nothing wrong with that agreement because it was made in order to help Great Britain, who had made great sacrifices during the war; but where the betrayal came in was that the gift made in the name of Canada was paid for by the farmers of the three western provinces.

When the farmers came to Ottawa last month some of them came to my office, those who came from my constituency of St. Boniface. I told them that their brief had not the proper background, that it had not a proper basis for the demands made. I said that I agreed they had demands to make and that they were not coming here as beggars. I said, "This country owes you at least \$500 million." Why was that not mentioned in the brief? The Hon. J. A. MacKinnon, the then minister of trade and commerce, consulted with the western heads of the pools and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture in regard to this agreement and they gave it some approval, although the then minister of trade and commerce admitted they had not been consulted as to quantity and price. So this was not a farmers' deal, it was a government deal.

The agreement was signed on July 24, 1946 and it was announced to parliament on the next day, July 25, 1946. It was then a *fait accompli*, but at that time the then leader of the Conservative party, Mr. John Bracken, and the late Mr. Arthur Ross of Souris, took a definite stand against that deal. They stated it was not fair to the farmers, and that if the farmers were going to sell their grain at 50 cents less than what it was worth in the world market they should be given parity prices.

At six o'clock the committee took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The committee resumed at 8 p.m.

Mr. Regnier: Mr. Chairman, when you called it six o'clock I was talking about the great betrayal of the western wheat growers by the Liberal and C.C.F. parties in 1946. I was amazed that in the last march on Ottawa by the western farmers who presented a brief, the greatest ground on which they could have claimed against the government was not even referred to. As I said before the adjournment, in 1953, as reported in the *Winnipeg Free Press* of January 24 of that year, Senator Crerar was reported to have stated that the grain growers of western Canada had lost \$500 million under the British wheat agreement and the international wheat agreement.