

Canadian Wheat Board Act

Mr. Diefenbaker: Today the price goes up 4 cents over and above the 17 cents that was cut off. What has happened in the intervening period? There are high prices for agricultural implements and for the things the farmer has to buy. Agricultural prosperity has been eroded by inflation. Farm machinery prices have gone up in the last three years to an extent that beggars description in adequate terms. Action is necessary.

Mention was made today by the hon. member for Churchill (Mr. Simpson) of the facilities at that port. The minister said we will ship as much this year as was shipped last year, according to present forecasts. That is not enough. Churchill is not being utilized as it should be. The great interests in Montreal and Vancouver are opposed to the adequate use of Churchill. Adequate use of the facilities there would give the western farmer several cents a bushel more than he is receiving today, because of the reduced cost of transportation. The hon. member for Churchill has fought this battle, as yet unsuccessfully. I hope the minister will give the assurance, not that we will ship through Churchill as much as was shipped last year but that we will ship at least 20 million bushels more than have ever been shipped through that port.

The wheat situation is just part of the larger picture. I mentioned the increased prices of farm implements. The hon. member for Humboldt-Melfort-Tisdale (Mr. Rapp) has asked for action in this connection, but the minister, looking Lincolnesque, I am told, has not taken action.

Mr. Winters: Are you referring to me?

Mr. Diefenbaker: No, I am referring to the Minister of Agriculture. The Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Winters) wins the prize for pulchritude. The minister misunderstood me; he looks like Errol Flynn.

Mr. Winters: I hope not.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I was directing my remarks to the Minister of Agriculture and suggesting that action should be taken. Recently we saw the farmers visiting parliament, kept outside of parliament. I suggest to the minister that he had better get, not a report on farm implement prices, but action.

Mr. Muir (Cape Breton North and Victoria): He had better get cracking.

Mr. Diefenbaker: The farmers of Canada are being bled by the unjust prices charged

today by the farm implement corporations. That is clear and definite. If the minister has any doubts about that and would contradict it, I give him the opportunity to do so. He cannot deny the fact that regardless of the increased cost of production, farm machinery prices today bear no direct relationship in equity to those costs.

Now I come to one or two other suggestions, and I shall be brief, Mr. Speaker. This is a segment of the plan for improving agriculture and ensuring a fair deal for the farmer. I should like to see the establishment of a federal marketing board, or boards, in conjunction with the departments of agriculture of the provinces. Many who opposed the wheat board as being a dangerous intrusion into private business have today become worshippers of the wheat board.

I should like to see the establishment across this country of boards similar to the wheat board. I should like to see action in that regard to provide a sensible marketing system for the eastern dairy farmer. We have proven through the wheat board what can be done. I remember the beginnings of the board in western Canada. As a boy I attended a small school where for the first time the idea was put forward by certain farmers that something could be done, and they formed what they called a farmers institute. That was in 1907. One of the things they asked for was that the farmers have some control over the marketing of their wheat, and also some protection, which they did not then have, against the inequities perpetrated against them. This has now been achieved through the medium of the wheat board.

I realize that there will be some disagreement with regard to what I am about to say. The minister has the power to include flax and rye under the wheat board without any action of parliament. These two cereals should be treated under the wheat board. At the same time I would suggest that farmers should be able to sell by private sale those products which are under the wheat board. Two weeks ago I raised with the minister the question of the shortage of oats and barley in Manitoba. He produced statistics which indicated that there was no particular shortage. However, I find that the oats and barley which were in shortage were mainly those not available for feed. Therefore the argument that I was making at that time for a release from the provisions of the Canadian Wheat Board Act so that farmers may dispose privately of a certain portion of their oats and