

Wheat—Marketing of Surplus

Let us remember that, while American farmers under their system are protected substantially against such reductions, our farmers have been unable to realize even their immediate requirements in some cases from the stored grain, and their credit has already been substantially reduced by these things that have occurred within the past few days. Therefore there is infinitely greater need for a clear declaration of policy here than there is in the United States. I submit that instead of having a clearer declaration of policy here there is a much clearer declaration of policy in the United States and that the farmers of that country know where they stand much better than our farmers do at this time.

I repeat that the situation is such that it is not for us to offer a solution for a situation that demands immediate attention. Over and over again the government has said: We will assume the responsibility; the people have entrusted us with that responsibility. It is the government, under these international arrangements and under the various devices that have been employed, which must act if anything is to be done.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I submit that in the interests of the farmers of western Canada, who must be so greatly disturbed at this time; in the interests of all farmers in Canada whose farm products will be affected in their value by what happens to wheat, as we have so often learned in the past; in the interests of the retail merchants in the communities which serve them; in the interests of our various organizations which serve our producers, I believe that there is no more urgent demand confronting the government now than that for a clear, understandable declaration of policy which will make it possible for our farmers and others to plan for the balance of this crop year and for the coming crop year which will be upon us in less than two months.

I would ask that this matter be dealt with not as a want of confidence motion. I ask that the statement of the opposition be taken as definite that we would prefer that it be dealt with as a free vote so that members of the house can express their opinion to the the government that there should be a declaration of policy at this time. I therefore move, seconded by the hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker):

That all the words after "That" to the end of the question be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"this house is of the opinion that in view of the present grave situation in the matter of international wheat trading the government should make an immediate declaration as to its policy respecting the marketing of our Canadian wheat surplus."

At six o'clock the house took recess.

[Mr. Drew.]

AFTER RECESS

The house resumed at eight o'clock.

Mr. H. R. Argue (Assiniboia): The announcement made yesterday, Mr. Speaker, that the Canadian price for wheat was to be reduced 10½ cents per bushel constitutes a very serious blow indeed to the economy of western Canada and also to the whole Canadian economy. The minister for commerce and agriculture in Australia, Mr. John McEwen, in a statement appearing in the press yesterday has pointed out the dangers that exist in the present wheat situation. He says that the present practices being followed may lead to a depression in wheat prices similar to that prevailing in the 1930's.

I see by a press dispatch this evening that the United States is now offering low grade wheat for as little as \$1.30 a bushel or 24½ cents a bushel under the price of Canadian feed wheat.

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): It is out-of-condition wheat.

Mr. Argue: The dispatch did not say out-of-condition wheat, it said light-test wheat.

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): Out-of-condition wheat.

Mr. Argue: This is just another one of those optimistic comments that we have had month after month, and every time the minister makes a forecast it is just a matter of weeks until his forecast is proven wholly wrong.

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): All I am asking is that my hon. friend quote the newspaper accurately.

Mr. Argue: The inference now that the United States is just selling something that is out of condition may or may not be borne out by the facts. The press statement I read did not say that the three million bushels of light-test wheat being offered in Minneapolis at \$1.30 per bushel was out-of-condition wheat. The Argentine is now selling wheat at between \$1.63 and \$1.66 per bushel. Unless steps are taken to prevent a further deterioration in the price of Canadian wheat the results will be catastrophic to western Canada.

I listened before six o'clock to the speech delivered by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Drew) and I heard his amendment calling on the government for a declaration of policy. I am sure we on this side of the house support the proposition that it is time now for the government to declare its policy in relation to the marketing of wheat. But I was disappointed that the official opposition,