

Supply—Agriculture

profit, and I can assure the minister that it is not the farmer. Now the ministers of this government tell us that the farmers have never had it so good. If this is a joke, I say it is certainly in bad taste with the farmers. The government has made no move to protect the interests of the farmer. Western farmers realize that this is a normal situation under a Liberal government.

Everybody in western Canada recalls the mountains of wheat we had out there in 1956 and 1957. That was also a time when a Liberal government was in office. The attitude at that time was: If people want this wheat, let them come and get it. The attitude now is: Let us give it away. I say to the minister and the government that they cannot even do that this year.

I have here a clipping from last Saturday's *Leader-Post* which says that wheat exports are down 58 per cent. The article reads in part:

Canada's wheat and flour exports were down 58 per cent in the first five months of the current crop year, the Dominion Bureau of Statistics reported today. Sales from August to the end of December totalled 110 million bushels in terms of wheat equivalent, compared with 260,800,000 bushels for the same period of the previous crop year.

Another article headed, "Lower Beef Prices Seen," reads:

While prices of other meats may strengthen in March, beef prices are easing downward.

Despite these facts the minister in his speech last night left the impression that the farmers of western Canada never had it so good. This government has perpetrated a betrayal of the interests of the western farmers. At the same time it has neglected and ignored the farmers of eastern Canada. Last summer we saw on parliament hill 10,000 eastern Canadian farmers who put their views before the government. Ministers who have no conception of the problems the farmers have to face told them to be good boys and that they never had it so good. Then they locked the doors of the parliament buildings.

We now have a situation which all the eloquence of the Minister of Agriculture cannot conceal. Wheat prices have slumped drastically because two ministers who know absolutely nothing about wheat went to Geneva and gave away everything to the serious detriment of the western farmer. I can understand the predicament of these ministers. They go on the international circuit and do not want to hurt the feelings of anybody but the western farmer. Apparently they were ready to

[Mr. Watson (Assiniboia).]

agree to anything. Why is it that every time a Liberal government is in office the western farmer has the rug pulled out completely from under him? When the Conservative party was in office these things did not happen.

Mr. Roxburgh: Nothing happened.

Mr. Watson (Assiniboia): We did not see the hon. member for Qu'Appelle going to these conferences and handing over the interests of western Canada on a silver platter. Under this government we face sagging prices, diminishing markets, uncertain prospects and a refusal to face facts. Why do they not admit they have made a mess? Why try to kid the western farmer?

The Minister of Agriculture found out, when he met the western stock growers in Calgary a couple of weeks ago, that you do not kid the western rancher either. The trouble with this government is that there are on the other side of the house so many leadership hopefuls that to them running the country is just a part time occupation. What do they care if the western farmer faces higher costs and has to pay \$16,000 for a combine that in 1962 could be purchased for \$12,000? What do they care about the small farmer who could buy a 30-inch combine from 1950 to 1955 for \$5,000 and who today have to pay \$10,000 for the same type of machine?

A few years ago the Minister of Finance, who was minister of trade and commerce at the time, was playing around with the wheat board. At that time he went to western Canada, I believe to the city of Moose Jaw, and asked the farmers to cut back on their production. Then a little later he came out west and asked them to grow all they could.

The Minister of Trade and Commerce and the Minister of Agriculture went to Geneva representing our farmers, and again the western farmer was taken for a ride. Those ministers must have been consulting the Minister of Finance because they decided the Canadian farmer did not need protection during the period when there would be no wheat agreement.

What has happened? While the Canadian farmer has been completely unprotected the Americans have forced down prices in order to unload as much surplus wheat as they can. They have done this with the consent or through the ignorance of this government. Talk about the blind leading the blind. United States markets have stayed up while