

*The Address—Mr. McKay*

in the federal state of Australia. He came here to prepare a report for his government, in which he made a comparison between what we had done in Canada in this field, and what was being done in Australia.

**Mr. Fulton:** Which authority did he consult?

**Mr. Garson:** This is what he said:

The premiers' conference resumed on April 29, 1946, but owing to the uncompromising attitude of the premier of Ontario, Hon. G. A. Drew, and the impossible attitude of the premier of Quebec, Hon. M. L. Duplessis, who did no more than reiterate time and again that the British North America Act, 1867, was sacrosanct, the conference broke up.

**An hon. Member:** Is that all he found out?

**Mr. Garson:** That is all he found in connection with this matter. I suggest, however, that in the light of these considered, objective and judicial judgments of the conduct of the leader of the opposition, at a time when he was premier of Ontario, it might be advisable for him, the next time he protests so much about his innocence in this matter, to bring forward, if he can—and I challenge him to do so—some judgment of an equally objective character which holds him innocent of breaking up the conference.

**Mr. E. B. McKay (Weyburn):** Mr. Speaker, on this occasion I should like to speak concerning several matters which affect Canada as a whole and which are of the utmost importance to the people of southern Saskatchewan. One of these matters, which is agitating the minds of farmers across this country, and particularly those of western Canada, is the price they will receive for their wheat during the next few years. They are gravely concerned about the possibility of the federal government being unable to negotiate a long-term agreement with Great Britain, our chief customer, after the current agreement comes to an end.

Another subject of considerable concern to the prairie farmer is the campaign which is now at its height against the Canadian wheat board and which may persuade the government of this country to discontinue the operations of that important body. I do not believe the discontinuance of the wheat board would be popular with most western farmers. They react most unfavourably to the suggestion that the Winnipeg grain exchange might again be permitted to trade in that important primary product, wheat, which in turn would mean that the Canadian wheat board would be replaced completely by the exchange.

Most western farmers, and I believe farmers all over Canada, are opposed to the return of a speculative market in wheat. They have a definite aversion to the Winnipeg grain exchange and this feeling of antag-

onism is not without some foundation. The farmers do not forget the fact that following the first world war the exchange opened for business in August, 1920, when the price of wheat was \$2.75 per bushel, but after it had operated for a little over a year, by October, 1921, the price for the same grade was down to \$1.11. They do not forget the low prices that prevailed in the thirties when the exchange was in full operation. According to the Rowell report, page 175, table three, the following prices were shown to have been paid in 1930 in Saskatchewan:

	Price per bushel cents
Wheat .....	47
Rye .....	17
Oats .....	15
Barley .....	12

No one will deny that the world-wide depression which prevailed at that time certainly would have depressed the prices of primary products, but nevertheless most farmers are convinced that had the Canadian wheat board been still functioning at that time prices would never have been allowed to drop to these ridiculously low figures. I am satisfied that the western producer has accepted slightly lower prices for his grain in the past several years largely because of the prospect of having future prices stabilized and regulated through the wheat board and by means of long-term agreements so that there will be no return to the depressed prices of the thirties.

The western farmer knows full well that he has never received as high a price for his grain as has his American neighbour. This is largely due to the fact that 80 per cent of Canadian wheat is exported while only 20 per cent of the American production is exportable surplus in normal times. It has been possible for the United States to subsidize wheat exports in various ways and to maintain the price level of wheat on the domestic market, something which Canada with her much smaller population would have great difficulty in effecting.

It is obvious that, if the price level of wheat is to be maintained, long-term agreements are necessary. Because of this knowledge western farmers are interested in the fact that the united nations has set up a food and agriculture organization designed for the purpose of studying world-wide production, distribution and consumption of food. The primary objective of the nation members of the food and agriculture organization is to raise the levels of nutrition throughout the world, a most laudable objective. The attainment of the objective of giving every person enough food is dependent upon there