

Statement of the Minister of Trade and Commerce

On the orders of the day:

Hon. J.A. MacKINNON (Minister of Trade and Commerce): The hon. member for Qu'Appelle (Mr. Perley) suggested yesterday that if the international wheat agreement should be tabled to-day I might make a statement on it. In tabling the agreement the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) has announced that it will be printed in the Votes and Proceedings, which I think obviates any necessity for any long statement on my part, particularly in view of the fact that some time ago a statement was given to the press which received very wide distribution in Canada. However, I might very briefly refer to a few of the important points covered in the agreement, for the benefit of other hon. members, perhaps not as diligent as the hon. member for Qu'Appelle, who may be inclined to follow it up.

The Washington wheat conference was held between Great Britain, Australia, Argentina, the United States and Canada. A convention was drafted which it is hoped will ultimately be agreed to between all wheat exporting and importing nations. Realizing that no general conference could be held at the present time or possibly for some time after the cessation of hostilities, the five nations participating in the Washington meetings have agreed to implement the terms of the convention as far as possible until it is ratified by all interested countries.

The main points of the convention agreed to be made operative between the five countries are:

The relief pool - article 6 page 6 - of not less than 100,000,000 bushels of wheat: Canada, 25,000,000, the United Kingdom, 25,000,000, the United States, 50,000,000, and Argentina, Australia, Canada and the United States such further amounts as may be agreed.

Control of production - article 2, page 2 - so as to not exceed domestic requirements plus the basic export quotas and maximum reserve stocks provided for in the convention.

Control of stocks - article 3, page 3 - providing for Canadian year-end stocks of not less than 80,000,000 or more than 275,000,000 bushels.

Export control of wheat and flour - article 4, page 4 - providing for Canada to have 40 per cent, Argentina 25 per cent, Australia 19 per cent and the United States 16 per cent of the total volume of international trade in wheat and flour after allocation of quotas to other exporting countries not now parties to the present agreement, and allowance for exports from governments not party to the agreement.