

Mr. BROWN: By the Prime Minister.

Mr. MATTHEWS: Oh, no.

Mr. BROWN: Mr. Ward goes on to say:

I have been a resident of the province for more than a third of a century, and have been in the closest touch especially with rural Manitoba for that entire period. For the past three or four months I have been engaged in making a tour of the province, holding meetings and discussing current conditions with the most representative farmers, merchants and others, one of my objects being to ascertain present conditions and the outlook for the future.

For Saskatchewan and Alberta I am unable to speak from personal knowledge, but so far as the province of Manitoba is concerned, I am quite able to say that Mr. Bennett does not know what he is talking about, and has not the slightest conception of the circumstances which exist here. I visited one of the rural areas of Manitoba Tuesday, not one of the worst, but one that in former years was considered among the best.

In that district I was told by the leaders, who know local conditions accurately, that in one area ten miles square, there was but one solvent farmer left, and the country merchant is naturally, along with the farmer, in a poor position too.

I am thinking of wiring Mr. Bennett to-day, and congratulating him, so far as the west is concerned, on writing his own obituary notice. What he has said indicates a total and complete failure to appreciate a situation worse by far than was ever experienced, even in the hard early days.

Mr. BENNETT: I hope the hon. member knows something of Mr. Ward's agricultural history.

Mr. BROWN: I have no doubt hon. gentlemen will make speeches which will seek entirely to explain away the speeches they have previously made. There is not the slightest doubt about it. However the words of the right hon. gentleman are on Hansard, and any reasonable man will give to them the interpretation I am now giving to them.

Mr. BENNETT: Will the hon. member permit a question? Does he consider Mr. Ward an agricultural authority?

Mr. VALLANCE: He is president of a farmer's society.

Mr. BROWN: The question is asked to throw reflection upon one who was an hon. member of this house.

Mr. BENNETT: I simply have asked: As an agriculturist does the hon. member consider Mr. Ward to be an authority on agriculture?

Mr. BROWN: I will answer in my own way, please.

Mr. BENNETT: Surely.

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Mr. BROWN: We are not now on the orders of the day and I am going to answer the question as I wish. The question asked by the right hon. the Prime Minister is one which seeks to throw a reflection upon a gentleman who was an esteemed member of this house and who for five years was my room mate. I consider that Mr. Ward is a man thoroughly acquainted with agriculture in a way in which many hon. members opposite are not.

Mr. VALLANCE: Including the Prime Minister.

Mr. BROWN: Yes, because Mr. Ward made his way as a working man. It is no discredit to him to say that he climbed with his working clothes on to the position he holds to-day.

Mr. MANION: And so did the Prime Minister.

Mr. BROWN: And Mr. Ward is a farmer. He has been directly in contact with farmers of the province of Manitoba. Carrying out the duties of the office to which he was elected he made trips throughout the province of Manitoba and I consider he is just as able correctly to estimate the condition of things among the farmers in Manitoba as any hon. member opposite. In fact I have no hesitation in saying that he is better able to do it than nine-tenths of the hon. members opposite, and when I choose that figure I am allowing a large proportion?

I have before me another extract from a Canadian Press despatch from the city of Saskatoon. It is as follows:

Need of clothing relief on thousands of farms in Saskatchewan is stressed by the United Farmers of Canada in a reply to the statement of Premier R. B. Bennett that the west is not suffering from depression.

Mr. BENNETT: He did not say that, either.

Mr. BROWN: No, he did not say it was not; we know—

Mr. BENNETT: No, he did not say the west was not suffering from depression; on the contrary he said it was.

Mr. BROWN: I do not say the Prime Minister said the west was not suffering from depression, but what we are saying is that he minimized that depression.

An hon. MEMBER: Read it from Hansard.

Mr. BROWN: Very well.

It ill becomes—

Oh, but we are not allowed to read from a former debate. If I might be allowed, Mr.