

The Address—Mr. Johnston

"It means there will be a reduced income for farmers at a time when labour and other callings are receiving increased prices and wages. We see no reason why the farmer should take less."

That is the danger farmers see ahead of them. On every hand they find that the commodities they must buy are increasing in price, while the prices of the commodities they sell are being lowered.

Let me pass a warning on to the farmers at this time in regard to markets. It seems to me that the only source of marketing they will have at their disposal will be those organizations which they may themselves set up by way of co-operative marketing.

The *Rural Co-Operator* of Tuesday, February 28, says this:

The January 6 issue of the *United States News* carried in its business outlook for 1950 an interesting forecast:

"Corporate profits estimated up \$1.6 billion. Farm cash income estimated down \$1.6 billion."

And then later on it says:

If the *United States News'* forecast is correct the money farmers won't get in 1950 is going into the pockets of the coupon-clippers!

Time to wake up, Farmer! Time to buy yourself an organization that can fight back!

It seems to me the only possible way left of marketing goods successfully will be through those co-operative marketing agencies which the farmers themselves set up. That would seem to be the position from now on. It appears strange that now the government should take the view that it ought not to have anything to do with helping the farmers to dispose of their surplus products. Yet there was no hesitancy during the war, when it was easy to sell. Now when it has become more difficult the farmers are being told, "You take this thing, yourself. We want to get rid of it."

I was pleased to note that when he spoke a few moments ago the minister made reference to another matter, namely the operations of the wheat board. What he said was of interest to me. I believe one of the reasons he gave for people voting Liberal was that they must believe in something. However, as I said at the outset of my speech, the Minister of Agriculture surpasses anyone else in Canada in making statements today and contradicting them tomorrow. He said he had been able to be elected twelve times, and that that was a pretty good record.

Mr. Knowles: He said he got by.

Mr. Johnston: Oh, I beg your pardon, that is right—he got by. He was able to be elected.

Mr. Gardiner: A majority of forty-seven hundred is not bad.

[Mr. Johnston.]

Mr. Johnston: There is no mystery about that, because the minister could go out on a platform and make the farmers believe—and probably did—that they were being treated better under a Liberal government than even they themselves ever expected to be.

I want to speak about the operations of the wheat board, and perhaps what I shall say will explain to the minister why so many people were fooled at election time. To my mind the functions of the wheat board should have always been to market the farmers' produce at the best prices obtainable. In that respect the board would be a worth-while organization. It could continue to function very successfully with the co-operation of provincial marketing agencies. I would like to see it continue as such an agency, and particularly have it operate to dispose of Canada's surplus production through ICCH.

The minister made particular reference to the interim payment of 20 cents discussed here the other day by the hon. member for Melfort (Mr. Wright), and went on to point out again today that the only possible way in which those payments could be made to farmers was by borrowing. He made that definitely clear today—and if it was not clear today, certainly it was made very clear on February 27 when, replying to the hon. member for Melfort, the minister said, as reported at page 284 of *Hansard*:

May I ask the hon. member if he is not aware that every farmers' organization in western Canada, including the pool locals, were asking for that 20-cent payment before seeding,—

I think I can agree with the minister on that, because when I asked him a moment ago when the resolutions he was reading were received he said they were from November 4, 1948, to February 28, 1949. No wonder the pool organizations, the farmer organizations and even members of the House of Commons were asking that that payment be made because they all thoroughly believed that the payment which was about to be made would be from moneys which had accrued to the credit of the wheat board. In fact, the insinuation was made as early as March of 1948, before the minister began to receive these resolutions, that there would be a payment of 20 cents. Of course farm organizations, pools and members of the House of Commons did insist that those payments be made. But they had the knowledge that that money was right there, in the treasury of the wheat board.

Mr. Gardiner: By way of correction may I say that my hon. friend has said my statements will not bear investigation. Therefore I do not want him to put any on the record which will not.