

Wheat Export Prices

in part today by Canada. I spent last week in Saskatchewan because of the visit of our Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) to my province on Wednesday and Thursday last. If I may, Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment briefly on the Prime Minister's day in southern Saskatchewan last Wednesday, for all of which time I was with him.

In the forenoon we had a very cordial and frank meeting with the executive committee of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. They presented a brief which was a model of clarity and objectivity. It was a good source of information for the Prime Minister and a fine preparation for meetings with farmers on two farms later that day and in other parts of the province the next day. The wheat pool requests were moderate, well reasoned and thoughtfully expressed.

I wish to point out in passing that the government recently appointed Mr. Charles Gibbings to the Canadian Wheat Board. Mr. Gibbings had been President of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool for over eight years. He is a practical wheat farmer in Saskatchewan, one of the best informed and respected farmers in the grain business. Farmers have been asking for such representation for many years and I believe the people of western Canada are very appreciative of the fact that this government has made this extremely significant appointment which I believe augurs well for the future operation of the Wheat Board.

We had a noon meal with Premier Thatcher and members of his government. The discussion again centred around the farm income problem, including box cars, quotas, prices and markets. I am sure the Prime Minister must have been impressed with the gravity of the farm income situation and its evident effects on the urban centres, the provincial economy and the dangers inherent for the national economy.

After abruptly concluding this luncheon meeting in order to keep on the planned schedule for the afternoon, we were met by a group of people outside the hotel, many of whom I am sure were not farmers. Our Prime Minister was asked to speak to the crowd, which he agreed to do. It turned out to be one of the worst displays of bad manners on the part of some individuals in the crowd that I have ever been unfortunate enough to witness.

The Prime Minister was interrupted constantly by catcalls, unfriendly remarks and some that were almost obscene. Many placards were displayed, some of which were to

the point, but many others were rude, crude and vulgar. We were struck in the face by handfuls of wheat thrown by someone in the crowd. The private cars which had been arranged for transporting the Prime Minister's party to the airport were damaged by sabotage. We were not able to use them and had to use R.C.M.P. cars instead.

An hon. Member: We read all this in the newspapers.

Mr. Douglas (Assiniboia): I do not quarrel with the right of people to put on demonstrations, but this was unreasonable. I wish to take this opportunity on behalf of the vast majority of the people in Saskatchewan who were shocked, embarrassed and saddened by this shabby display, to publicly apologize to the Prime Minister for the appallingly bad manners exhibited by some persons in that gathering.

I am happy to say the rest of the day was pleasant and informative. We went to two farms south of Regina, in one of the main wheat growing areas of the west, one of which was my own farm.

An hon. Member: That figures.

Mr. Douglas (Assiniboia): There, the Prime Minister discussed farm operations and intimate financial problems with ten selected farmers and their wives.

An hon. Member: Carefully selected.

Mr. Douglas (Assiniboia): These farmers were chosen because they were representative of different age groups, different sized farms and different stages of the development of their farm enterprises. The Prime Minister saw and operated some of the high-priced farm equipment which is required on grain farms. He saw bins full of grains that cannot be delivered. He saw the figures for last year and this year which show that even in good farming areas farmers cannot pay their expenses at present quotas and prices, much less meet capital payments where they, on advice from agricultural authorities and experts, have tried to expand to become economic units and to increase their efficiency.

I know from news reports that the other days in the prairie provinces were also very informative and, for the most part, cordial and candid. I am sure that the Prime Minister is much better informed, especially about grain farming and the current problems surrounding that industry, than he was before his trip. I trust that he and the government

[Mr. Douglas (Assiniboia).]