

The Address—Mr. E. G. McCullough

given me permission to read in the house a telegram which he sent me the other day:

Am concerned by actions taken by some persons and organizations with respect to farmers' financial position. I have before me press statement stating telegram sent to you by farm implement dealers' association in Winnipeg. Also note that previously the retail merchants association has made representation to you on the same matter. I personally wish to commend you on a statement you are reported to have made to the Manitoba pool. The answer I am giving to the uninformed public in this matter is that the farmer is in a strong position. I suggest he has sold more than an average crop in the last three years at reasonably good prices and in addition has his granaries full and in some instances grain piled in the field. This cannot be reckoned as a calamity but can only be assumed to add up to a condition greatly enhancing his economic position. I have had letters from and conversations with many of the bank managers in Edmonton with respect to the farmers' credit position with their institutions and find that on every occasion they are not experiencing any unusual circumstances in meeting credit demands of farmers. Much use has been made of the farm improvement loan and I have had no complaints by farmers of not being able to take advantage of it. I suggest that before anybody should become panicky over the farmers' financial position the situation should be analyzed carefully and the source and motive behind these representations should be clarified. Certainly I do not think the farmers should be encouraged to borrow money at this time and I do believe an examination of complaints will show that the first interest of those who are complaining will be other than on behalf of the farmers' best interests. May I ask in all seriousness, how can farmers carry on under crop failures and other adversities which we have experienced in years gone by if they cannot carry on under present conditions for a limited time?

Roy C. Marler, president
Alberta federation of agriculture

The situation on the prairies may be summed up as follows: Wheat board payments for wheat, oats and barley during the calendar year 1953 will reach \$1,104 million, the highest in history. Payments from these sources during the calendar years 1951, 1952 and 1953 total \$3,093 million, which is almost equal to the combined income from these sources of any five preceding years. I have already said that final wheat participation payment for 1952 is not included in these figures. In addition, prairie producers have on their farms very large stocks of high grade wheat, as well as supplies of oats and barley, most of it well housed and in good marketable condition. Bankers have assured me that this grain is good collateral at the bank, and of course it is the best of insurance against loss of income through short crops in the future. The prospects are that this grain will move to market at about the normal rate. Satisfactory income to the producers from wheat, oats and barley during 1954, and probably beyond that period, is assured regardless of the size of the crops.

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Therefore I cannot agree with the Leader of the Opposition in his statement that the situation of the prairie producer is more than critical and that special legislation is required to deal with this situation.

Mr. Speaker, these are the facts of the current grain position. They are such as to call for the utmost effort on the part of the wheat board to sell grain throughout the world. I submit that the board is making that effort. The situation calls, too, for the most efficient use of the elevator space available, so that producers can deliver the maximum amount of grain. I submit that a good job is being done in that respect, too.

Most important of all, perhaps, the situation calls for a steady hand. The government does not resent criticism and recognizes that it is the duty of the opposition to criticize. But I hope that in this house and elsewhere the criticism will be responsible, and will not lead those who are unaware of the facts to wrong conclusions, either about Canada's wheat policy or about the financial position of the western wheat producer.

Mr. E. G. McCullough (Moose Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I very much welcome the opportunity of speaking at an early date in this debate, particularly after just listening to the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe) and his statement on the wheat situation in Canada.

I intend to refer at some length to what I think is a very serious and critical situation facing western farmers, particularly in the marketing of western wheat, and I take exception to the perennial optimism expressed in the minister's speech as delivered to the house just now.

I consider it, Mr. Speaker, to be a very great honour to be returned to the House of Commons to work with my colleagues, the members of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. I intend to do my utmost to promote the objectives of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation because, upon returning after some absence from this house, I feel that the policies of the C.C.F. are the only ones that can bring sanity to the financial and economic problems facing Canada. Upon returning to the house I was rather impressed with the isolationist attitude and feeling one gets in parliament here at Ottawa. I feel, Mr. Speaker, that if we could go across the country before coming into this house to debate problems before us and perhaps see some of the difficulties that exist from coast to coast there would be an urgency in our deliberations which would bring more action than we see at the present time.