

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

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**Tuesday, September 26, 1967**

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

### TRADE

#### DECLINE IN WHEAT PRICES—MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT UNDER STANDING ORDER 26

**Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam):** Mr. Speaker, I ask leave, seconded by the hon. member for Springfield (Mr. Schreyer), to move the adjournment of the house under standing order 26 for the purpose of discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely:

The critical situation facing Canadian wheat producers in consequence of the catastrophic decline in wheat prices; the absence at the present time of an international wheat agreement to provide an effective floor price; the sale of large quantities of United States wheat at prices considerably below the floor price stipulated in the proposed sixth international wheat agreement; the decline in orders for Canadian wheat in recent weeks; the increasing danger that the sixth international wheat agreement may not be ratified by reason of the government's failure to reach an agreement with Washington to maintain the price differential between Canadian and United States wheat until such time as a new agreement comes into force.

• (2:40 p.m.)

**Mr. Speaker:** Would the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam kindly address the Chair and the house on the question of urgency of debate?

**Mr. Douglas:** Mr. Speaker, the fact that this question is of utmost urgency is best exemplified by the statement of Mr. Chas. W. Gibbins, president of the Saskatoon wheat pool, who said that the wheat producers of Canada now face a crisis greater than any they have faced in over 20 years. The fact is that we have been lulled into a false sense of security. Since April the price of wheat has dropped by some 22 cents a bushel. The farmers are not protected at the present time under an international wheat agreement. The fifth agreement expired on July 31 of this year; the new agreement, if it is ratified, will not be coming into effect until July 1, 1968. In the meantime the United States has been unloading wheat at prices as much as 8 cents a bushel below the floor price in the proposed new agreement.

In spite of this drop in price, orders for Canadian wheat have been declining. The most serious question of all which this house may have to consider is the distinct possibility that the new agreement, the sixth annual agreement, may not be ratified. The period for ratification is set for October 15 to November 30. With prices below the proposed minimum it will be difficult to persuade importing countries to ratify that agreement; yet if the agreement is not ratified the farmers of this country will be without any protection whatsoever, or without any effective protection.

Since this matter affects the whole agricultural economy, since what is involved can represent a serious decline in farm income and have widespread economic implications for Canada as a whole, I submit, Mr. Speaker, that a discussion ought to be held on this matter immediately.

It was said yesterday that the Minister of Trade and Commerce might make a statement on motions. I submit to Your Honour that a statement on motions merely permits a statement to be made by a member from each party. Such a procedure would not provide the opportunity for full debate. It would not give the minister the opportunity to close the debate, to answer questions and to give the house full information.

I think, therefore, this matter is of such urgent importance, not only to the prairie farmers but to the entire Canadian economy, that the business of the house ought to be adjourned to discuss it forthwith.

**Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Bow River):** Mr. Speaker, may I say as a member of this party that we support the motion of the leader of the New Democratic party. The house may recall that yesterday the first question on orders of the day was directed by this party to the government benches, and it had to do with this very matter. Had we had a clear answer then the Chair and the house would not have been faced with a motion such as this. I say with the greatest respect to the Minister of Trade and Commerce that he was absent yesterday. Now that he has returned no doubt a statement to the house, on behalf of the government, will be forthcoming.