

Supply—Agriculture

much representation from the grain producing area of this country. Hon. members will recall when they went over and made an agreement known as the British wheat agreement. This is what I was talking about when I said it cost the farmers of that day \$600 million. Let us see what this author had to say about that. He was working on the wheat board at that time. I quote from page 133:

To opposition charges that the wheat producers had lost \$600 million Mr. Howe replied that the government would give consideration to the "alleged" loss when the pool was settled towards the end of the year. There the matter rested officially, but in the country controversy continued with attempts being made to assess the responsibility for the agreement as between the government and the farm organizations themselves.

As the time approached when a final payment from the Canadian wheat board might be expected a new development occurred. In an address at Regina to the Saskatchewan wheat pool delegates on November 17, 1950, Mr. Gardiner, Minister of Agriculture, said a further payment by Britain under the four-year agreement was still under discussion. "All I am going to say," Mr. Gardiner is quoted as declaring, "is that I don't think the gap has been completely closed and we will go on with discussions and see if there can be some conclusion arrived at which will be satisfactory not only to the farmers of the west and the government of Canada but the government of Great Britain as well." Nevertheless, discontent was increasing in the west.

What did they do then? I do not know whether or not it was on the authority of the then minister of trade and commerce, but Mr. Gardiner went to Great Britain and discussed the problem. They said, here is the deal for five years and that is the deal with which you are going to stay. It was on that deal the farmers of western Canada contributed, as a nation, \$600 million to the war effort of that time. These are the people who would suggest to us that we should get out of office and let them run the country and implement another kind of agricultural program of that nature. I do not believe the western farmers will think well of that situation.

What did the Liberals do about it? They brought in this bill which resulted in a payment of \$65 million being made on this debt of \$600 million. Even those people who said \$600 million was too much all say it was at least \$300 million. Whatever figure you want to take, the farmers suffered a loss when they got from that party \$65 million.

You may say, what does that all add up to? It adds up to this: At that time the board was selling wheat under the British wheat agreement for \$1.15 while wheat was selling in the world market for \$3.15. I am sure the farmers are quite willing that there should be some ceiling on the prices of the commodities they produce, as there is on other commodities; but the ceiling which was

[Mr. Woolliams.]

placed on wheat during the Liberal term of office was greater than at any other time in our history. At this point I rest my case so far as wheat is concerned.

I now want to come back for a few moments to the criticism being made of the Minister of Agriculture. When he spoke in Edmonton on October 12, 1960, the *Edmonton Journal* reported the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Argue) as follows:

National C.C.F. Leader Hazen Argue said Tuesday the appointment of former northern affairs minister Alvin Hamilton as agriculture minister in a federal cabinet reshuffle is a mistake.

The minister had not been sworn into his portfolio before the hon. member for Assiniboia said his appointment was a mistake. The minister had not dotted the first "i" in the first letter he wrote as Minister of Agriculture before the hon. member for Assiniboia was criticizing him. If he says it is still a mistake today, I suggest that no western member of parliament is going to heed the hon. member for Assiniboia, and the newspapers have ridiculed him for saying so. In fact, the *Edmonton Journal* was a Liberal party supporter.

Another newspaper, the *Lethbridge Herald*, which is not always so kind to the government, on November 24, 1962, after the fictitious attack by the Leader of the Opposition, the hon. member for Assiniboia, the Liberal party and later the N.D.P. party on the Minister of Agriculture, said in an editorial, dealing with the very thing I am speaking of:

Hon. Alvin Hamilton continues to amaze everyone (including the farmers) by the depth and breadth of his knowledge of agriculture (and farmers).

As a member of parliament representing a large agricultural area I say it does not matter how the Liberals dish it up because the farmers in western Canada are not going to accept the fact that the minister, whatever statement he may have made in Regina—and I have the statement in my hand—made a mistake. He was merely discussing their problems with them. These people in the opposition, just like the prairie coyotes crying in the wilderness, would like to build straw men. On this occasion I do not think they are going to meet with success because practically all the major newspapers in the country say that the Minister of Agriculture acted in a capable manner, properly, judiciously and equitably so far as the farmers are concerned.

As I say, I have the minister's speech in my hand, I have not time to read it all, but this is what the minister said:

Specifically, I wish your organization at all levels to consider and discuss—