

The Address—Mr. Gardiner

Mr. Gardiner: They are dated November 4, 1948, December 7, 1948, January 11, 1949, January 8, 1949, February 28, 1949, and December 29, 1948. As a matter of fact, with the exception of those in January and February of 1949, they are all in the latter part of 1948.

What is the nature of these resolutions? Well, they are not all in the same wording, but all have a similar meaning. Here is the one from municipality 108, directed to me and stating:

That we ask the federal government to use their influence in having the 20 cents per bushel payment on the 1945, 1946 and 1947 wheat crop paid in the areas which have suffered from drought at the earliest possible date and that a copy of this resolution be sent to the Hon. J. G. Gardiner, federal Minister of Agriculture and to the Canadian wheat board.

Those resolutions were passed throughout the country. I say this only in reply to the suggestion made the other day by the hon. member for Melfort that the farmers did not ask for 20 cents. They did ask for 20 cents. They put it in resolutions, asking that 20 cents should be paid.

There is only one way in which money can be secured to handle wheat throughout the wheat crop year, when payment was made in the preceding year, and that is by borrowing at the bank. Ever since we have had a system of wheat board handling of wheat, we have had the provision whereby the board was to be in a position at all times to borrow money. There is no other way of carrying on from year to year. When the wheat starts to come into the elevators the farmer is to be paid his initial price. He is being paid this year on a basis of \$1.75 per bushel. Previously he was paid on a basis of \$1.55. Every bushel of wheat that was delivered into the elevators had to be paid for as soon as it was dumped into the elevators, and the money with which to pay for it was borrowed at that time.

The transaction goes on. The wheat is gradually moved to seaboard and then over to Europe, Great Britain or some other place. Until that wheat is actually disposed of and payments are made, financing must be done by that method—and always has been done by that method.

The effect of the complaint being made by those who do complain—and, so far as I know, they are all in this house, and in the other place—is that somebody did not guess exactly what the payment was going to amount to. In other words, in paying out \$213 million, they found when they got to the end of July that they did not have quite as much cash proceeds from sales as they had borrowed at the bank in order to make the payments. My hon. friend's accusation

[Mr. Johnston.]

in connection with this is that someone in the government—and I think I know as much about the wheat business as anyone in the government; I am sure, too, that my colleague the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe) knows just as much as I do about it—was in error. I venture to say that neither of us would claim that we could estimate the payments which were going to be made within some \$4 million or \$5 million of what the amount would actually be. Payment was made at 20 cents per bushel over a period of four years and, as was suggested a while ago, this time when payment is made it will be for five years.

That being so, we have no criticism to make of the hon. member for taking his cue from an hon. member in another place, and introducing it into this house. But we have been wondering why everyone stopped talking about it as soon as he did introduce it. I think probably he got good advice to the effect that there was no other way of doing the job, that if we were going to do it again we would have to do it in the same way and, since he wanted us to do it again, probably he had better keep quiet from now on. I think probably that is the answer to it, or the reasonable conclusion which could be drawn.

Those are the two or three matters which had been brought up and with which I wanted to deal. But there is another phase of the discussion which has taken form in this debate, and to which I think I should pay some attention. There appears to have been a great deal of worry in the minds of hon. members from the opposition side of the house on the question as to how we on this side of the house managed to get three-quarters of the membership of the House of Commons at the last election. They have been worried about it.

Mr. Cardiff: You are going into that again?

Mr. Gardiner: Yes, and probably you will wish you had not gone into it. Mr. Speaker, I have been in public life for almost thirty-six years, and while I am not very good at quoting Shakespeare or any of the great authorities on English, nevertheless I remember that somebody once wrote something like this: He who steals my purse, steals trash, but he who robs me of my good name, robs me of something which leaves me poor indeed.

I have always thought that under our democratic system of government there is only one way you can get elected more than twice. Sometimes you can get by once and sometimes you can get by twice by misleading the people, but you are never able to get by very often if you continue to mislead them.