

The Budget—Mr. Willis

be eliminated in a world that has barricaded itself against other exporting countries to support their farmers?

Apparently the contention of the press in some parts of this country, and apparently the contention of some hon. members who sit opposite, would be that that should be done.

May I again quote Mr. McFarland, perhaps the world's greatest wheat expert, who in a speech at Moose Jaw on February 14 last said:

Men say, "Let the price go down to any disastrously low level to which speculators may drive it," and proudly boast that that would reduce acreage and production. Yes, my friends, they are correct, that will do it, and would have done it, in Canada, and with a vengeance. Such men do not consider how cruelly unfair it would have been to our citizens to leave our farmers to fight such an unequal contest, when all other exporting countries have been assisting their farmers in various ways, so as to maintain them on the land.

And again:

With the world wheat situation nearer to normal than at any time for the past six years; with present subsoil moisture conditions on this continent far below normal, we should not regard a probable carryover in Canada of 80 million bushels or even more, as a calamity to be avoided by now attempting to force our wheat on world markets at a price below what it has cost to produce.

And he concludes:

No one will ever be able to estimate the great benefits the producer, and the people in general, have received as a result of the government's support of the price structure on the last five crops of Canada, which produced the grand total of 1,750,000,000 bushels. I want to say to you, without prejudice, and based upon my inside observations of our own market conditions, in conjunction with those of the world's market in general, that in the absence of government support, it is clear to me that there would have been such chaos, that I am sure I would not care to have been a resident in these parts of the world.

If I am correct in interpreting the arguments of hon. members opposite, that is precisely what they desire us to do. They say that this wheat should be dumped upon the markets of the world at a time when there is a shortage and at a time when we will soon have an advantage because of the quality of our product. They are suggesting that we sacrifice the farmers of this country by throwing upon the markets of the world their wheat at a price below the cost of production. The hon. member for Shelburne-Yarmouth is one of those who advocates this action. I would not have the temerity to speak with regard to fish, which he may understand, and I do not think he should have the temerity to speak as a wheat expert.

[Mr. Willis.]

In addition to carrying the wheat crop for the last five or six years this government has sent out additional trade commissioners who have been selling wheat in a way it has never been sold before. Then there was the bonus paid on wheat of five cents per bushel for one year. As a result of this bonus a total of \$12,706,000 was paid in one year to the farmers of western Canada. It is true that some of the farmers did not receive this, but I think it is the first time in the history of Canada that a government has had the courage to bonus the western wheat producers. This is also the first government which has had the courage to indicate that such a bonus was to compensate for conditions brought about by tariffs. Because of the Ottawa agreements we have a six per cent preference on wheat entering Great Britain, and this has permitted us to sell large quantities which otherwise would not have been sold.

I have a vivid recollection of the campaign of 1930 and I remember the former Minister of Education of the province of Manitoba going about my constituency and indicating to the people that if the Conservative party was returned to power they would never get the Crownsnest rates on the Hudson Bay railway. That was one of the first things done by this government but as a result of the speeches made by that gentleman—no doubt there were dozens of others saying the same thing—hundreds of votes were lost to me and I suppose thousands of votes were lost to other hon. members.

I should like to refer to the question raised by the hon. member who has just preceded me (Mr. Spencer). He asked: What of the farmer? I should like to direct the attention of the house to the functions of the federal government in connection with relief and particularly in connection with agricultural relief. The municipality has the first responsibility with regard to agricultural relief. The municipality has the machinery to handle the situation, the councillors and other representatives of the municipality are on the ground and know the situation. When the municipality is unable to handle the situation it must of necessity go to the province. Why is this? It is because the province created the municipality; the municipality obtains its legislative authority from the province. There is no connection whatever between the municipality and the federal government. The federal government begins to function when the province asks for assistance. At that time the necessary advances are made to the provinces with which to handle relief. The federal government does not handle relief, and particularly agricultural relief.