

must be a reduction in interest rates because it is impossible for the farmer in western Canada to meet the interest charges that are being piled up against him. I have been twenty-eight years in that country and I have never yet been able to borrow money from the banks at less than eight per cent, and I think that is true of most of the farmers out there. The mortgage companies are not reducing their rates; they still hold out for eight per cent compound interest, and the banks are doing the same. I am therefore glad that the government has appointed a royal commission to investigate banking and currency questions, and their investigation will undoubtedly include interest rates and the other questions I have mentioned. The action of the government in that respect will be appreciated by the people of this country. If there could be a reduction in interest rates, it would give hope and encouragement to agriculture. I think it might be possible to recommend that interest be thrown off for a year or two. The Canadian Pacific Railway Company threw off the interest which the farmers on their lands were paying two years ago, in order to give them a little encouragement, and at the very least I do not see why the mortgage companies could not reduce their interest rates.

There is another question I wish to speak about, and that is the cost of agricultural implements and repair parts. The farmers are demanding to know why agricultural implements and repair parts are as dear as they are to-day.

An hon. MEMBER: You had better come over here.

Mr. LOUCKS: I think it is time that question was investigated. I remember that when I bought my first binder out west in 1906, a Massey Harris binder, it cost me \$170. In 1907 I bought my second binder, and it cost me about the same. What do we find to-day? Binders are costing all the way up to \$290. I mention that to show how the price of our implements has gone up while wheat is selling at practically the lowest price in history. I can tell you that very few binders were sold in our town last year. There was only one purchase, and the purchaser told me that he bought it on a two-year term and that it cost him \$295. That is a ridiculous price to have to pay at this time. I remember that in 1905 I bought a John Deere 14-inch gang plough, with breaker bottom, and the price was \$101. To-day it costs around \$200. Those are excessive prices, and the farmers are asking why they should have to continue to pay these prices when their

[Mr. Loucks.]

products are selling so low. I know that the farmers say that it is easy for the manufacturer to close his factory and lock up his door. But the farmer cannot do that. He must continue. It would be pitiful for the people of this country if the farmer ceased to produce.

Last summer before harvest I had occasion to buy repairs for a combine. I needed a new table canvas for my combine. I do not know whether some hon. members know the nature of a canvas for a combine. The length of that canvas is 33 feet or twice 16½ feet. I asked the price, and the agent wanted \$93 for a canvas. I said, "You are crazy; surely you do not mean that." "Oh, yes," he said, "that is the price." I said, "That means at least three hundred bushels of wheat to pay for the canvas." He said to me, "Mr. Loucks, you go over to that tent-builder over there. He repairs canvas and he may be able to do something with that old table canvas of yours." I went over to the tent-builder, and I got a price on duck to rebuild my canvas, and the price was \$11 for the duck to put on a new table canvas. Then I went to the hardware store and bought \$2 worth of rivets, so altogether it cost me \$13. I have a boy who is quite a mechanic, and he fixed it up. So I paid \$13 for a table canvas for which I was quoted a price of \$93 by the dealer. Such a price is ridiculous. All that was left outside of the canvas were the slats and four strips. If the manufacturer had charged me \$25 for the labour, that would have been quite sufficient.

I might mention another thing, the bill hook for a Massey Harris binder. I do not know whether some hon. members know what a bill hook is, but it is self-explanatory; it is a bill with a hook on it. We have always paid \$1.60 for a bill hook, and this year for the first time in my twenty-eight years out west I had to pay \$1.75. Is it any wonder that the farmers are asking, why should this thing be? Imagine the number of bushels of wheat it takes to pay for a bill hook for a binder to-day, and you have to replace bill hooks quite often.

Some hon. members may say that it is the tariff that is causing the increased price. But I take issue with that. It is not the tariff. I was down in Montana on the first of January and I got prices on an International binder, an International drill, and on different implements; and I found that right in the state of Montana prices are about the same as at Delisle, Saskatchewan. So it cannot be the tariff. That is not the cause at all.