

Sir GEORGE FOSTER: Yes,—the matter was talked over and very earnestly canvassed. I may say that Mr. Harris was chairman of the Trade Mission in London. Ministers were in London, and I shall read the telegram that was sent by the Prime Minister (Sir Robert Borden) to Mr. Sifton, because it will explain precisely the point of view of the Government at that time. On July 14 the following cablegram was sent to Mr. Sifton,—and this is no doubt the message to which Dr. Magill had reference:

Question of marketing wheat crop most urgent. Suggest that you and Robertson—

That is, Dr. Robertson.

see the British authorities immediately and impress upon them the necessity, in Imperial interests, of making arrangement to purchase in Canada. We could furnish part credit, but most desirable that as much outside money as possible should be provided, as our exchange with United States becoming serious. Unless action taken at once railway companies will be most seriously affected in their earnings, as crop will not be moved to the seaboard. Ascertain if British Government would make an offer for, say, fifty or seventy-five millions of bushels at a fixed price, or at a price to be fixed later on on some agreed basis such as price paid in the United States. Cable reply as soon as possible.

This cablegram explains its own purpose and import. It was to ascertain from the British Government whether they would take our surplus, to what extent they would take it, and what would be the financial terms upon which it would be taken if they made up their minds on the question. That, of course, is a very different matter from sending a cablegram to Mr. Harris or to Mr. Sifton or to anybody else authorizing him to sell seventy-five million bushels of grain. The Government was intensely interested in getting some sure market for the surplus grain of the farmers of Canada, which at that time was in an impasse. It seemed to have encountered an obstacle, and there was no chance, so far as the Government could see, of that obstacle being speedily removed unless the British Government would come to our aid with an offer or a promise or an undertaking to take a certain part or the whole of our surplus.

Mr. ROBB: Having read the cablegram from the Government to Mr. Arthur Sifton, who was then in England, has the minister any objection to reading the cablegram that was sent in reply, if there was such a message, or to stating whether Mr. Lloyd Harris or Mr. Arthur Sifton had any [Mr. Robb.]

conversation with Lord Crawford with regard to the Canadian wheat crop?

Sir GEORGE FOSTER: After that cable had been despatched Mr. Sifton and Mr. Robertson immediately got into communication with the British authorities and inquired as to what they would do, and when, and on what terms; and a few days after the interview an answer was received to this effect, if I remember rightly, that the Royal Wheat Commission would make their purchases and make them at the lowest possible price. They gave no promise and no intimation as to how much they would take, as to when they would take it, or the price which they would be prepared to pay.

Mr. ROBB: The minister has not made any reference to my question as to any conversation between Mr. Lloyd Harris and Lord Crawford.

Sir GEORGE FOSTER: If there was a conversation between Mr. Lloyd Harris and Lord Crawford, it was to the same purpose. I am not quite sure but what Mr. Harris saw Lord Crawford with Mr. Arthur Sifton and Dr. Robertson.

Mr. CRERAR: I think there is some force to the point that my hon. friend from Maple Creek (Mr. Maharg), has raised in regard to the claims that may be made against the wheat board in the event of it being established after the opening and subsequent closing of the market should this occur. Personally, I see no objection to the board appropriating from its funds in such case the amount that may be necessary to discharge bona fide losses that may have been incurred in legitimate trading. But what I would point out to the minister in charge of this Bill is that there might possibly enter into this a large speculative quantity, that might easily run into a very considerable amount of the board's money. I hope the legislation is not wide enough that the board would, under such circumstances, be obliged to make good any losses, arising from pure speculation.

Sir GEORGE FOSTER: Quite right.

Mr. CRERAR: That is one point I wish to impress upon my right hon. friend. There is one other suggestion that I would like to make and that is that the Government should reach its decision at as early a date as possible as to whether or not it is going to control the handling of wheat for next season. I cannot imagine anything that would be more unfortunate in its re-