

Alleged Failure to Aid Western Farmers

I have on numerous occasions heard officials of the Wheat Board, the government and other people bemoaning the fact that the world market for wheat is in bad shape and this is the reason Canadian exports are now less than they were some years ago. I ask you, sir, to consider the figures contained in the annual report of the Canadian Wheat Board for 1967-68. It is true that the exporting nations of the world sold less wheat in 1967-68 than they did in 1966-67; they sold 1,748 million last year, and the year before they sold 1,891 million bushels.

Let us look at some of the main countries which export wheat and see just where we stand percentagewise with the rest of the world. These are the facts: in 1966-67 the United States exported 742 million bushels of wheat; last year they increased their sales to 753 million bushels. Australia in 1966-67 sold 257 million bushels of wheat, and last year they dropped to 255 million bushels. This is a difference of only two million bushels. In 1966-67 France sold 113 million bushels, and last year they increased their sales to 153 million bushels. The U.S.S.R. sold 152 million bushels in 1966-67, and last year they sold 201 million bushels.

These figures are taken from the annual report of the Canadian Wheat Board, and no official can get around them. The fact is that the only country which failed to dispose of its wheat last year was Canada. Canada last year sold 336 million bushels of wheat, and the year before we sold 515 million bushels. When I talked to the officials of the Wheat Board they pointed out that the United States is in a give-away situation; they give food away and make deals with the rest of the world for the disposal of their wheat. I ask, Mr. Speaker: Is there not the word "deal" in the French and English languages? Cannot we in Canada make deals so that we may also dispose of our wheat?

I say these things, Mr. Speaker, although it is not the nicest thing for me to stand up as a member of the government party and make the comments I have been making. But when I was in Saskatchewan I visited farm after farm, just as I did when I was in eastern Canada, and talked about the disposal of milk, hogs, or whatever it may be. At that time I gave the farmers my word that when I came back to Ottawa I would place these facts before the government. I want to be able to look at myself in the mirror tomorrow morning when I am shaving and say that I kept

[Mr. Whicher.]

my promise to these people, regardless of where the chips fall.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Whicher: I have tried to be fair to the Canadian Wheat Board. I have placed before the house the opinions I gained from the farmers of western Canada. I impress upon the government that in order to sell commodities in the world market today, no matter whether it be newsprint, wool, nickel, wheat or milk, there is only one way in which it can be done—you have to get out and meet your customers, not only those to whom you have sold in the past but those to whom you hope to sell in the future.

With all due respect to the Canadian Wheat Board and the government of the day, all one has to do is read the figures contained in the annual report of the Wheat Board to realize that the year before last Canada sold wheat to 118 countries, and last year we sold it to only 36 countries. In other words, we did not go back and see 82 countries and try to sell them our wheat. We did not go back and say to them, for example: Were our transportation facilities adequate? Was the quality of our grain high enough? Was the price okay? Is there anything we can do for you? How about coming out with us for dinner? This is the way business is done today. It is the only way you will sell milk, wheat, nickel, newsprint or anything else. You must have the ability to say "Hello"; you must have the ability to make a deal.

We visited the province of Quebec and what I believe to be one of the largest powdered milk producing plants in Canada. When talking with the chief salesman of that large organization he pointed out that he travelled all over the world selling powdered milk. He also pointed out that when a person wanted to make a substantial sale he sometimes had to bestow favours upon the prospective buyer. This happens in private life all the time. It happens every day of the week as far as salesmen south of the border are concerned. They are professionals at it. Those professionals last year increased the sale of wheat in the United States by 11 million bushels. Their sales were not reduced as ours were. Therefore I suggest that in some respects we should copy our friends to the south.

• (5:50 p.m.)

The alarming situation as far as the United States is concerned is that this country is our chief opposition in the selling of wheat in the