

*Supply—Trade and Commerce*

one branch of agriculture, which is so important to the west, should have been brought to this stage of crisis before any action takes place. This government has adopted a rather cavalier attitude to world agreements in respect of primary food commodities. In so far as a sugar agreement is concerned, nothing is heard about that at all. As a matter of fact this is one aspect of Canadian agriculture, but compared to the whole Canadian agricultural industry it is a small aspect. The government never has seen fit to do anything about really bringing about a sound sugar agreement. This is another matter which I trust the hon. member for Medicine Hat will take up when he has a little more time after the wheat problem has been settled.

When the problem of international wheat agreements is so important to the country as a whole and so vital to the west, it seems strange to me that the situation which has developed could have developed with so little sound and fury from the government spokesmen through the last few months and that we had to wait until the opening of parliament before anything could be done about it. Even when it is done, it is a shoring up operation which does not look to the future.

I trust that those who are responsible will make every effort to reduce the kind of unfair competition which comes from outside and not inside Canada. I think the spokesmen for industry and trade on that side of the house have looked too long at what they felt possibly was competition within Canada and have been neglecting the sort of competition which can arise in the international market. This type of competition can have serious repercussions for a variety of industries, but especially for the agricultural industry.

**Mr. Langlois (Mégantic):** Mr. Chairman, I do not intend to take up too much of the time of the house on this matter, although it is a matter of importance. I presume the Minister of Trade and Commerce, possibly better than anybody else in the house—at least I hope so—realizes the importance of this problem. I presume he will give us a lot of information concerning the situation in which the farmers suddenly find themselves now because of this latest crisis in respect of wheat and grain prices.

Some people might say to me, "What are you worried about in this regard when you are a member from a province that has not much to do with the export of wheat". They might say to me, "What do you know about the price of eggs in China". I do not know

[Mr. Johnston.]

much about the price of eggs in China, but I know more about the omelet than I know about the hen that laid the egg.

This is a situation which is somewhat surprising because in the past the government has shown much interest in guaranteeing prices to the farmers. This attitude has resulted in a certain amount of stability. The situation at the present time is somewhat surprising to the producers as well as to members of the house. However, the fact that in the major wheat growing areas of Canada this year there is a very low yield compared to some of the past years, particularly last year, is causing anxiety to some of the farmers.

I recall when the news release came out announcing that the farmers were to get 20 cents more at the elevator. This pleased some of the farmers who did not know exactly what this whole thing was all about. It did not give the farmer much more over-all. It gave him more at the elevator but not in the back payments. If he gets 20 cents in the fall, he does not get it in the spring.

One matter which concerns and angers the farmers at the present time is that they are not working necessarily for their own benefit. I would dare put it this way; they are all in the service of the farm machinery producers and manufacturers. When the farmers have to face the problem they are facing now of wheat contracts being sabotaged, and when they are in the position of not knowing what they are going to do with the little bit of wheat which they do have to sell, I think the government has a duty and a responsibility to look into the problem, make recommendations and adopt stern measures if necessary. Steps must be taken to stop this trend in the rise of the cost of farm machinery. Unless this is done, we will be faced with a major problem in the farm industry before too long. When one considers the prices of farm machinery 10 or 15 years ago, it would seem there is absolutely no reason for such a spiralling in the cost of farm machinery.

I think there are little tricks employed by the farm machinery producers which the farmers themselves cannot correct. You might say that they do not have to buy these machines. When harvest time arrives a farmer who has machinery which is three, four or five years old which needs repairs just cannot wait indefinitely to have the repair work done. One might say that he could have had it done in the spring. He might have, but he did not have the money in the spring. When the crop ripens in the fall he has to fix that