

Mr. SPENCER: It varies greatly, but I do not suppose the average farmer can produce a bushel of wheat under 70 or 75 cents per bushel, taking it year in and year out.

Mr. MACDOUGALL: Take your own case, does it cost you that much?

Mr. SPENCER: The hon. member will have forty minutes of the time of this house in which to present his side of the case.

I know of cases in western Canada where the price of oats and rye has been so low that the farmers have not considered it worth while to cut. These crops will be eliminated in the spring by the easy method of applying a match to them. Conditions are bad when such things as this must be done. I know of one man within a mile and a half of town, which means a low hauling cost, who had a splendid crop of rye, but on account of the very low price which had been offered at the elevators, and which was four cents a bushel at that time, he could not see his way to harvest it. I know of another man who this year took off some 25,000 bushels of grain in wheat, oats and rye. After taking off that crop, which was one of the best he had ever had in western Canada, and after deducting the expenses of selling the crop, he found that he was \$2,000 in the hole.

We hear a great deal about mixed farming. The hon. member across the floor who attempted to interrupt a few minutes ago would be one of those who would suggest that the western farmers go into mixed farming. This is a very interesting piece of advice, because it is always given by those whom we term "arm-chair farmers." I wonder how the arm-chair farmer who offers the advice would like to go into mixed farming at these prices. Last year sheep were bringing in western Canada the enormous sum of from \$1 to \$3 a head. Cattle are down to six cents a pound. Hogs are down to from four to five cents a pound and we expect a severe drop next year because the farmers, on account of the quantity of rough feed they have, are going largely into the raising of hogs to get rid of it. In February of this year butter was selling on the prairies at as low as fifteen cents a pound, and eggs are selling at as low as from eight to fifteen cents a dozen. Wool has been the lowest for years. What is the result? Debts have been accruing; mortgage interest goes on; many bank loans cannot be wiped off; taxes cannot be met, and the people generally are wondering not only how they are going to carry on, but how they are going to live. Through all this trouble the one business institution in Canada that might have given some help—I refer to the private banking

system—has been more or less of an irritant than anything else to the whole situation. I shall say a few words about that later.

What has been the action of the federal government through all this? Can we say that outside of the very lavish promises made last July they have done anything except one or two things that I shall mention in a moment. I want to pay a compliment, however, to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Weir), a man who had the pluck to come out openly and criticize what all the people wanted to criticize, that is, the banking system of this country. Although the price of farm products has dropped, we find that interest charges are being maintained to the limit, eight or nine per cent being charged for bank loans. We find also that we are being charged exactly the same freight rates to haul our grain to Fort William when wheat is worth only ten cents or 20 cents a bushel as when it was worth \$1.50 a bushel. Why should the farmer have to take all the loss? We find Mr. Beatty of the Canadian Pacific railway coming forward with a recommendation that a loan company be formed to enable farmers to go into debt for mixed farming. We appreciate Mr. Beatty's offer in this respect, but we would have thought a great deal more of him had he come forward, knowing the condition of the western farmer, and how he had been stranded, and offered to cut freight rates on our grain and stock. I believe Mr. Beatty is the same gentleman who only a very short time ago was spending money to bring more people into this country to go on the land, to break up more sod, grow more grain and, incidentally, create more freight, to pay more dividends to the shareholders of the Canadian Pacific.

I shall now give a few comparisons of prices between industry and agriculture. If, a year ago, the farmer had bought a twenty-four-row seeder, this year, taking average grade, not taking the highest or the lowest by any means but a good average, when he sold his grain in the fall, he would have to sell no less than 2,000 bushels of grain to pay for the seeder. If he wanted to buy a pair of boots, he would have the choice of three things: he could sell thirty bushels of wheat or sixty bushels of oats, or if his rye had any ergot in it he would have to sell 150 bushels of rye. If he wanted to have a good hearty meal on the diner of either of the Canadian railways he would have to take a sheep to market and sell it before he would get enough to pay for that meal. Actually this winter if the farmer were taking his butter to the store he would be fortunate if with the proceeds he obtained for each pound of butter, he got enough to buy