

*The Address*

in the ultimate market, there is an undue and unreasonable spread. I am not for the moment going to specify what that spread is, but those interested are convinced—and I agree with them—that the spread is too great. The duty of Parliament is to consider whether this matter is one of sufficient importance to engage its attention, and if it is, to give to that problem due consideration. Permit me briefly to make several suggestions; having done that, I shall come to one of the main points to be considered.

There is, Sir, the question of freight rates; that I shall discuss later in a separate argument. There is the question of leakage in the transmission of the grain from the point of shipment to, we will say, the head of the Lakes. There is shrinkage; there are dockages. I believe there are very unfair dockages; those who were in the last Parliament know my views on that point. I still contend that the shrinkage from the point of shipment to the head of the Lakes is unreasonably great. That, indeed, should engage the attention of the House and particularly, Sir, of the Government.

Now, some suggestions have been made in regard to the marketing of the wheat crop of our prairies. My hon. friends to my left, so far as I have been able to learn from their speeches and from conversation with some of them, stand frankly and freely for a renewal of the old Wheat Board. They say they have studied the problem, and that is their view. One or two with whom I have had conversation—and I believe they voice the opinion of others—tell me they are asking for the Wheat Board not as a permanent institution, but as a temporary measure because of the peculiar crisis with which they are now faced. The policy of those who sit immediately around me and who supported the late Government is also very clear: we felt, as announced by the right hon. leader of the Opposition (Mr. Meighen) before the last election, that a voluntary pool under the control and direction of the Government would be the best method. Be that as it may, Sir, the point I am coming to is this: it is an imminent question; it is a vital question; we are convinced, those of us sitting here, of the soundness of the contention of our hon. friends of the Progressive party that this question must receive immediate consideration. We think that if some decision is not arrived at within the next month,—that will appear to some hon. gentlemen as a large order, but no one knows better than

[Mr. Stevens.]

the hon. Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Motherwell) that what I am saying is true—unless there is a decision within a month, the agricultural interests of the prairies may be very seriously affected.

Let us for a moment examine this aspect of the question. I admit frankly that at first I thought the attitude of the western farmers was in the nature of a threat or boycott, but after looking into the matter carefully I was convinced that there were sound economic reasons why farmers situated a considerable distance from, we will say, the Winnipeg market—perhaps at points remote from transportation facilities—should hesitate to put in as large a seeding of wheat as they might do if they had some assurance of assistance in marketing. I see their point; the matter is a very serious one to them. My hon. friend the Minister of Agriculture was elected to this House and to the portfolio of Agriculture on the distinct pledge, most seriously given to his people, not only in Regina but in practically every riding throughout his district, because he is a representative man and has been for years—he was elected on the definite pledge that the Wheat Board would be brought in so far as his influence and power could bring that about. My hon. friend nods his head to indicate acquiescence in my statement. I do not want to embarrass him, but I put this very plainly to him and to the Government: Speaking for those with whom I am more directly connected, and with the consent of my leader, I say that we are prepared to-morrow to go before the suggested committee of this House and present our views on the subject. We are prepared to go before that committee and listen to and consult with my hon. friends to my left, who have another view to present; and we are prepared to go with a great deal of curiosity and anxiety to hear my hon. friend the Minister of Agriculture speak for the Government on that committee. But there should not be one hour's delay. Indeed, Sir, I am prepared and others are prepared to adjourn this debate if necessary so that this committee may be appointed and the work begun. This I am certain of, that not one hour's delay should be incurred. There should be no trifling with this question; it should be discussed and, if possible, a decision arrived at during the next few weeks.

I am not enlarging unduly on the importance of the matter. My hon. friend the Minister of Marine and Fisheries (Mr. La-