

International Wheat Agreement

He also stated that we should not exaggerate the value of this international wheat agreement. I hope I did not do that in the course of my remarks, but this is a continuation of three earlier agreements which have proved their usefulness in the trade in wheat. It is obvious, because of the number of countries which are participating in this agreement, that it has been of assistance in world trade. The experience of the past has been drawn upon, and this new international wheat agreement has gone a bit further than earlier ones. I do not wish to exaggerate its value, but it is very useful. As the hon. member for Assiniboia pointed out—and I think his phrase was rather good—this agreement gives us stand-by rules for the buying and selling of wheat.

I noted the remark of the hon. member for Assiniboia about my rigid optimism. I do not know whether or not I class myself as an optimist, but I think it is rather well to have what might be termed an optimistic approach to some of our Canadian problems rather than the opposite word, pessimistic. This was the only time in the course of my hon. friend's remarks when he deviated from what was a statesmanlike utterance, but he dealt for a little bit with this optimistic approach. My hon. friend is constantly warning us about disaster: he is sounding alarm; he is pointing out difficulties; he is purveying gloom; he uses adjectives like alarming, disturbing and drastic. I think he must be a very depressing type of person to live with.

Mr. Argue: I was just talking about you.

Mr. Churchill: I think it is wise now and again to look at the brighter side of life without becoming extravagant or careless in our use of words and phrases. I take an optimistic view, if you like to put it that way, with regard to conditions in Canada, and I am not depressed over the wheat situation. In fact it would be rather disturbing, I think, to our farm population if we here in the House of Commons were continually pointing out the grave difficulties that face us in the future, when we know from actual experience that some of the difficulties will be dissipated as time goes on.

Let me give you an example of that. Two years ago we had hanging over our heads here in Canada a surplus of wheat amounting to 730 million bushels. I well recall how pessimistic the outlook was two years ago on the part of some people in this country, but that surplus has now been whittled down to about 500 million bushels, which is quite an improvement. Two years ago perhaps we could not have foreseen that, but it was better to take the optimistic view than to be crying blue ruin.

[Mr. Churchill.]

Mr. Benidickson: Will the minister not agree that we must again, as I said earlier in my remarks, be realists? The over-all surplus of the exporting countries named in this agreement is perhaps larger than it was before.

Mr. Churchill: I quite agree that we have to be realistic in these things, and I hope I am being realistic. I shall speak in a moment about the world wheat surplus. I would just interpolate another word based on the remark of my hon. friend from Assiniboia about ghost writers. These are distinguished civil servants who prepare quite a bit of useful material. The only material they can be sure I will use without alteration are statements they prepare such as those for use in the House of Commons.

If the house will permit me, I should like to make mention of the fact that about a year ago I spoke to a group in New York and a distinguished member of the press gallery, Mr. Arthur Blakely, wrote a column along the line of what my hon. friend was saying; that this was a repetition of what had been said in the past and obviously I must be employing the same ghost writer who had written articles for Messrs. St. Laurent, C. D. Howe and Lester Pearson. Well, I wrote a note to Mr. Blakely and asked him to please not blame the officials of my department, because I had written every word of my speech myself and I regretted if I had simply been following along the lines that had been spoken by my predecessors. Well, so much for ghost writers.

May I say this with regard to the world surplus of wheat. We have to recognize the fact that wheat is grown in practically every country of the world. There is an increasing surplus of wheat being built up. Fortunately it is not of the same standard as the wheat grown in western Canada. A great part of it is softer wheat, which does not compete actively with the hard wheat which comes from our country; but there is an increased amount of wheat available throughout the world, and that creates problems with regard to international trade and brings up this problem of surplus disposal.

To deal with the subject of surplus disposal, this government actually, I think, made adequate protests to the United States with regard to this matter. At the same time we must recognize that they have taken cognizance of our protests and have modified their surplus disposal program of two or three years ago, and they are now operating under a method whereby consultation is carried on with our country on all occasions when the