

To come to the point that is at issue here, I am quite free to say, at least it is my opinion, that if the Government acts on this legislation we ought to act before the time necessary for the exchanges to open, in which event this clause would not come in. Those dealing in wheat must get ready, not at the time the exchanges open, but long in advance. They must have time to get ready to perform their function as wheat traders. Now they cannot do that, with a statute like this on the books, unless they see there is some provision that will prevent them landing in a bog. This clause is in order to give them assurance in the meantime that they are not going to be up against a stonewall, and perhaps certain losses, by getting ready to trade in the ordinary way. If circumstances do not demand that we use the legislation, the ordinary avenues of trade will then be open, but they would not be open unless provision such as this was made in the law. If, on the other hand, it should happen that the legislation is used after there has been some little trading on the exchanges—it could not be a very long time after trading had opened—if shortly after trading has started we find it necessary in the interests of wheat producers, in order that their wheat may move, to take this step, it does not seem to me to be unreasonable that actual losses incurred as a result of our action, taken solely in the interests of the producers in order that their wheat should move, should be taken care of by the board. Last year some losses were taken care of, and on a very fair basis indeed. Certainly, there was no over generosity; merely actual money out of pocket, not a cent of profit in any case, but only money actually out of pocket, and I do not know that all those losses were taken care of. I took part in the adjustment myself, and I kept it down to the smallest possible amount. That amount was taken care of. We felt that it should be taken care of by the board, but the board had a legal opinion that they were not competent to do so. If the Government is to interfere in the interests of the producer, the producer is not going to complain if actual losses are spread over the whole lot, rather than paid out of the treasury by those in whose behalf the legislation was not called into being at all. It is not going to be any great amount; that is inconceivable. There might be a small amount, but I would think there would not be any amount at all. I do not think it all probable or likely that a decision cannot be arrived at before wheat trading opens. But

even if it is not, it is better to have something of this kind on the Statute Books in order that there will be no barrier or discouragement to those engaged in the trade in the ordinary way that would prevent them from making their arrangements, so that if we did not call the Act into effect the wheat would move in the ordinary channels.

Mr. ROBB: Bearing in mind the statement of the minister, I think that this is a good time, in view of the statements of Dr. Magill before the Winnipeg Grain Exchange in regard to the conference he had with Mr. Lloyd Harris in London, England, to inquire of the Government as to what authority Mr. Harris had from them to sell the crop. Mr. Harris says that he went to England believing that he was authorized to sell the crop. Did he have any such authority from the Government?

Sir GEORGE FOSTER: The Government was extremely anxious as to what should be done with reference to the marketing of our wheat. We were confronted with government regulation in regard to buying in Europe. We had a crop which was beginning to be harvested and which had to start, in the way of finding its channels from the farmer to the ultimate consumer, immediately and not in two or three or four months' time. It could not afford to wait for an organized governmental agency on the other side to say whether, when, and to what extent that agency would purchase, because it might not make an offer or a promise as to whether it would take any or all; and if it did not, and for the length of time that it did not make that offer, there would be an absolute blocking of the passage of wheat from the farmers' hands out. If that obstacle were maintained for any considerable time—two or three months—it would throw the wheat of the West past the closing of navigation and imprison it there to a very large extent until the spring when there would be an opening. That situation will explain to my hon. friend the anxiety of the Government to know what the British Government proposed to do in the matter. For two previous years it had bought, for itself and for the Allies, practically the surplus of Canada, and the question was, would it do that for this present season, and to what extent would it do so? Consequently the matter was canvassed. Mr. Harris was here, and before he went to England, in the interview with Dr. Magill—

Mr. ROBB: In July.