

do in regard to the details of the voluntary scheme, and I am afraid I will have to refer you to them.

Mr. McMASTER: I was talking to some members of the Committee about this, and the reply is that it would be almost impossible to get the farmers to sign up. Well, it seems to me that that would be a guide as to whether the demand for the Wheat Board is really sincere or not. If the rank and file of the people want the Wheat Board they would be quite willing to sign up three months ahead of harvest time, I think.

The WITNESS: I would like to make a suggestion there, because I have given some little thought to the point mentioned—

The Hon. Mr. MOTHERWELL: Mr. Chairman, replying to what has just been said—

Mr. McMASTER: Mr. Riddell was just going to answer, Mr. Motherwell.

The Hon. Mr. MOTHERWELL: I beg your pardon.

The WITNESS: I think you will find this—this is my own opinion—in connection with signing up of the contract: You will find very many farmers whose financial condition is such that they cannot enter into a contract like that, because of the pressure brought to bear on them by their creditors. They would say, “No, you cannot enter into an arrangement whereby you get an advance on your commodity and perhaps keep me waiting a year.” He would not be a free agent at all as far as that is concerned. On the other hand, I believe that our financial institutions and our wholesalers under an arrangement such as the Wheat Board had previously regarded their accounts as being reasonably safe. That is to say, they did not have to contend with the fluctuating values. They knew every man was going to get the same price as everybody else, and there was a certain amount of stability to the credit arrangements. That is the impression I have gathered from the business men.

*By Mr. White:*

Q. Is it not true that the percentage of value advanced to the farmer when he delivered his grain would be the same in the case of the foreign pool as the compulsory pool?—A. Well, I would not like to say that, sir. I would not like to say that those in charge of a voluntary pool would dare go as far with an advance as they would with a complete system such as we had before. I would not like to say that.

Q. Of course, in the event of the farmers signing agreements they would be reasonably sure of a certain amount of wheat to deal with?—A. Well, is that so? Is that correct? A man signing an agreement—let me point this out to you, sir—any man entering into an agreement to deliver grain to a voluntary pool three or four months before his crop comes off can only make his agreement on the basis of his acreage, not on the basis of the volume. So far as your selling agents are concerned, they do not give a hoot about the acreage; they want to know the volume. You are entering into a contract to deliver the product of so many acres. That conveys no general information three months ahead of the harvest to any sensible selling agent.

*By Mr. Sales:*

Q. It may be five bushels or it may be fifty?—A. Yes, sir.

*By Mr. McMaster:*

Q. Wouldn't the compulsory Wheat Board be faced with the same situation?—A. The compulsory Wheat Board would know exactly that it was going to get the whole of the crop in this country—that is the difference—the other one would not know anything.

Mr. WHITE: My suggestion was not that the farmer would agree to deliver so many bushels, but that he should agree to deliver the product of so many acres.

The WITNESS: I did not know whether you had that in your mind or not, and that is why I explained that was all that could be done. The point in connection

[Mr. F. W. Riddell.]