

of natural commodities is certainly dangerous if not deleterious to business itself. I doubt the wisdom of continuing to fix the price of wheat. Why should we do so? It may be answered that it is our greatest crop. But is it not inevitable that if we continue to fix the price of wheat, we shall have to extend the policy to other natural products?

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: Hogs and cattle.

Hon. Mr. BLACK: Yes, but more than those.

Hon. Mr. CALDER: Lumber.

Hon. Mr. BLACK: From Montreal east, down through the Maritime Provinces, we have two major crops. The first is lumber. The most rapid spruce growth in Canada is in that eastern section, and with careful conservation we can get a crop of lumber once every twenty years. We have been told about the price spread of wheat. I remember when lumber was \$5 per thousand superficial feet, and it has been as high as \$45. That is a far greater spread than has ever occurred in the price of wheat. When the price reached \$45 a thousand everybody in the lumber business imagined he would be a millionaire before very long. Fortunately, or unfortunately, that high price did not continue. The price declined to the point where the man who operated on his own land did not get even the cost of taking off the lumber, and lumber men who cut lumber off Government lands did not get sufficient to pay the cost of operation and stumpage. The result may be imagined: the lumber business became bankrupt. Those who had been in the lumber business for generations were compelled to drop out. It may be taken for granted that if the Government continue to bonus wheat the people engaged in the lumber business in Eastern Canada will ask for a similar bonus on their product. I am quite sure that will happen. My only wonder is that such a request was not made long ago.

The production of potatoes is a vital industry to the farming communities of Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick. The price of potatoes has ranged from 5 cents to \$2.50 a bushel. That is a tremendous spread—far greater than any that has occurred in the price of wheat in the West. As everyone knows, potatoes sold at 5 cents a bushel cannot return a profit to the grower. Honourable senators from Prince Edward Island know more about potato growing than I do, but I think they will agree with me that the farmer must receive at least 40 cents a bushel for his crop in order to break even. Anything

Hon. Mr. BLACK.

above that price represents profit. But he must sell his crop the minute he has it ready. If he has to put the potatoes into his cellar and hold them, the cost of re-picking necessitates a return of 60 cents a bushel for him to break even. If he could be assured of a fixed price of 75 cents a bushel in the fall of the year he would be well satisfied. When the price soared to \$2.10 and \$2.50 a bushel he, too, had visions of dollars floating around him, and he increased his acreage. When the collapse came and the market was glutted he could get nothing for his crop and it rotted on his hands. If we continue to bonus wheat, is not the grower of potatoes and other products of the farm in the Maritime Provinces and Quebec fully justified in asking for similar treatment? As a matter of fact, those engaged in growing potatoes have a still stronger claim, in that the potato is a perishable product.

Some Hon. SENATORS: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. BLACK: Wheat can be carried over, year in and year out, but you cannot hold potatoes more than six months, and even within three months deterioration begins to set in, with the consequent expense of re-picking, and so on. I am not in the potato business, but I am in the middle of the potato-growing section of New Brunswick. I am confident that if the Government continue to bonus wheat they will have to come to the relief of potato growers and farmers engaged in the production of other products of the soil, or else dissatisfaction will increase until it reaches such a point that nobody will know what trouble may ensue. I see in this price-fixing of wheat or any other natural product nothing but danger. I do not mean danger to the Government, for, after all, the life of this or that government is quite immaterial to the life of the nation.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. BLACK: Your party may be in power to-day, mine to-morrow, and the short time we are in control will not very largely affect the country. But I do not think we are justified in leaving to those who follow us problems which they will find very burdensome and very difficult to solve.

Some Hon. SENATORS: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. BLACK: I was impressed by those who appeared before our committee a few days ago. The burden of their evidence was that the fixing of a price on grain was not good for the grain trade. As I was surprised to hear it, I asked one of the witnesses for a fuller statement, and he convinced me there