

speaking, but on reading *Hansard* I realized that I had thereby suffered a distinct loss, for I am sure the speech was a most interesting and unusual one.

I should like to speak for a short time on one paragraph in the Speech from the Throne, but before doing that I wish to refer to two or three statements that were made by the honourable leader of the government (Hon. Mr. Robertson) on Thursday last. The first is in reference to the wheat agreement with Britain. That subject was fully and ably covered by the honourable senator from Winnipeg, the leader on this side (Hon. Mr. Haig), and I do not purpose to go over any of the ground which was covered at that time. However, just in passing, I should like to remind the leader of the government that when he chides so severely those of us who belong to the Progressive Conservative party for our stand on this wheat agreement he should not overlook the fact that many members of his own party share our opinion. I have a distinct recollection of listening to a very fine speech that was made here last session by an able and experienced parliamentarian who knows the conditions and problems of western Canada as well as any and better than most of us. I refer to the honourable senator from Churchill (Hon. Mr. Crerar), who took exactly the same stand as was taken by the honourable senator from Winnipeg.

I should like to briefly repeat that stand, so that it will be clear in our minds. All of us, no matter whether we liked the terms of the agreement or not, were in favour of Britain receiving the wheat at \$1.55 a bushel. However, some of us thought that the \$300 million loss that was sustained should have been borne by the taxpayers of Canada and not by a few wheat growers in the West. That is the only point upon which there was any difference of opinion. In answer to that point the leader of the government said that the wheat growers of Canada were in exactly the same position as the Dominion Steel and Coal Company, the lumber industry and other industries which had to submit to a certain degree of price control during the war. To that statement I must take exception.

Hon. Mr. Horner: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mrs. Fallis: In the first place, there is no greater gamble on earth today than growing wheat in western Canada. But it is a gamble that must be taken by men who have the courage to do it, because the world must be fed. Those of us who are familiar with the West, and particularly with the greatest wheat growing province, Saskatchewan—I know something about this, for I lived on a wheat farm in Saskatchewan for many years—are aware that very few districts out

there have not at some period in their history suffered destruction of their crops by hail, drought, rust or grasshoppers, sometimes for one year, sometimes for two years and sometimes for as long as six years in succession, until farmers who formerly had been in a very prosperous condition were forced to go on relief.

The honourable leader of the government said in his speech last Thursday that the western farmer is more prosperous today than he ever was before. That may be true in some districts, but I would call the attention of the house to a press dispatch from Regina, dated February 4, which says this:

Prairie farm assistance headquarters today announced 51,378 prairie farmers will draw \$12,792,951 in assistance benefits for 1948.

The Saskatchewan share—by far the largest—is \$11,112,671, with 44,660 of the province's 120,000 farmers receiving "grocery and clothing" money to tide them over until the next crop.

That means that more than one-third of the farmers of Saskatchewan will be receiving assistance from the prairie farm assistance fund. I simply leave this thought to the good judgment of honourable senators: Did you ever see in any paper a similar item in connection with the Dominion Steel and Coal Company?

In discussing the points made by the leader on this side (Hon. Mr. Haig) with regard to the government's financial surplus, the leader of the government (Hon. Mr. Robertson) used these words:

They—

That is the members of the Progressive Conservative party.

—rather seem to delight in deficits, and they hold up their hands in holy horror at the prospect of a surplus.

My honourable friend is not usually so extreme in his language, or so prone to exaggerate. Perhaps he was carried away on the tide of his own eloquence and just did not realize what was the subject under discussion. Certainly, I know of no one in our party who has ever been opposed to the government having a surplus. We do, however, strenuously oppose the size of the surplus and the methods by which it was obtained. That is an entirely different matter. We are agreed that, if possible, it is sound financing to have a comfortable surplus of revenue over expenditures. That applies to both government and private financing. I submit that today the Minister of Finance finds himself in possession of an uncomfortable surplus. I think my honourable friends will find great difficulty in justifying to the taxpayers the taking by way of taxation of more than \$1,200 million