

*The Address—Mr. Cobbe*

● (5:10 p.m.)

We have in our agricultural industry people who are producers, who are businessmen and who know business. They should have the opportunity of showing that this is what they are and they should have the opportunity to sell their products within our country. We have in the past few months been faced with the problem of increased beef prices. We have been criticized for letting beef prices go as high as they have. We have also been criticized for beef prices not being high enough. The producer did not benefit nearly as much as one would expect from the prices that resulted.

I feel it is most important that we try to establish some means of stabilizing our meat products. It is not fair that the average producer should be afraid to market his product because tomorrow the price may be much higher. I often wonder what people in other countries around the world think when they want to place an order for Canadian beef. They might want to close an order for delivery three months from now; but what will the price be three months from now? It fluctuates to such an extent that I believe customers find it difficult to feel assured that they will obtain the quality of beef they require at a price they want to pay.

I have some complaints about the methods our beef producers have followed in the past in the raising of suitable cattle. When visiting fairs in my constituency I have seen cattle in the show rings which had so much fat that it was obvious that their producers would not get back the amount they had put in. I have talked to breeders about this and they agree that it is a problem. Only a small percentage of our population performs manual labour. We must remember that at one time the fat on beef was required by people performing manual labour; they needed it. If you follow present trends you will note the amount of fat that people want on their beef and realize that we are raising animals that are not practical.

The problems facing Canadian agriculture today are many and varied and I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that you have heard them spoken of many times in the House. But do you realize that when comparing grain prices with production costs the farmer of 1937 was better off than the farmer of 1969? It is true, in my humble opinion, that we need better public relations between the agricultural industry and the rest of the people in our

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country, and possibly throughout the world. We see a product on the shelf and complain about its price. Do we really know what the producer has obtained for his product? Would you agree that the producer's 3 to 6 cents a dozen on grade A small eggs is reasonable, when you see the price of eggs in the market place?

People do not have the opportunity to understand the difference between what a producer is paid and what we pay for his product. I feel it is most important that people outside agriculture should have a better understanding of the problems facing the people in the industry. One of the current problems facing people in agriculture—and I hope we can relieve their worries—is that of delivery over-quotas for seed grain. Many farmers in western Canada do not have the opportunity to sell enough grain to pay their taxes, let alone meet their operating expenses. These farmers are very intelligent and know what they ought to sow. If they hope to sow a crop next year they will have to look for different kinds of seed. If they are not in a position to purchase it, the industry will be crippled. I hope the department sees fit to continue its present operation in this regard.

I assure you, Mr. Speaker, that all the people in western Canadian agriculture were happy to learn that the Minister without Portfolio from Saskatoon-Humboldt (Mr. Lang) was given the opportunity to look after the Wheat Board. For too long has the Wheat Board operated under present regulations. It was established some 20 years ago and operated under regulations that were practical then. It is apparent that the regulations the Board works under now are far from satisfactory. Although the people in agriculture are facing hardships, I believe their present troubles will be a distinct advantage. I say that for this reason: never before have so many people been concerned about agricultural problems. I know that this is a difficult way for the people in the industry to get their story across to the rest of the country and to make other people concerned enough so that they will help in the solution of agricultural problems.

The Canadian Grains Council, which was organized last year for the purpose of studying and making recommendations on agricultural problems is, I believe, one vehicle that we shall use to overcome our problems. At its first organizational meeting, 35 different organizations attended, with over 100 people. These people are directly involved in various segments of agriculture.