

The Address—Mr. Gardiner

continue to help hold the front line against inflation by continuing to support the price ceiling.

If, to help win the war, the farmers are asked to accept a ceiling on prices, we believe they are entitled to a floor under prices to insure them against an agricultural depression after the war. As an essential part of its post-war policy, the government intends to ask parliament, at the next session, to place a floor under the prices of the main farm commodities.

In the speech from the throne at the pro rogation of parliament on January 31, 1945, it was stated:

As a further safeguard of a basic standard of living, provision was made at the present session for floors under the prices of farm and fish products. These measures insure two great primary industries against the hazard of a collapse of markets or prices after the war.

Farmers now find themselves in a position where the cost of production has continued to rise, but the prices of agricultural products have not kept pace with that rise. Cheese producers do not feel that prices existing at the present time permit the farmer a return which is sufficient to pay for the cost of production and allow him a profit in keeping with his labour and his investment on his farm. Any decline in farm income will mean that there will be a reduction in the purchase of the products of industry, and it will affect all workers in Canada as regards wages or work. While consumers have prospects of lower prices in dairy products, it should be pointed out that to a larger degree wages received by industrial workers are dependent upon our domestic markets to farmers. If the purchasing power of farmers is reduced, then the industrial workers will be the first to experience hardship. If a better understanding could be reached, and if the difficulties of the agricultural industry could be recognized by people in other walks of life, it would tend to the solution of some of the problems that the farmers of today are experiencing. The matter of adequate prices for agricultural products, giving fair return for labour and investments, is something which affects the whole economy of the nation.

Right Hon. J. G. Gardiner (Minister of Agriculture): The debate on the address, Mr. Speaker, has been continuing now for some time and it is not my intention this afternoon to attempt, in forty minutes, to answer all that may have been said with reference to the activities of the Department of Agriculture. I wish, however, to reply with regard to two or three matters which were referred to, some of them by the last speaker and others by previous speakers on the opposition side of the house.

Before going on to deal with the general charges which have been made with regard to the activities of myself as Minister of Agriculture before the election, during it and

since, I should like to join with all those who have commented upon the speeches of the mover and seconder of the address. It goes without saying that I was much interested in the speech of the mover owing to a fact of which probably not many members of this house are aware. When I went into the legislature of Saskatchewan in 1914 my seatmate was one of those fine Scandinavian immigrants that we were getting into western Canada about that time, some of them coming direct and some of them coming by way of the United States. That particular seatmate was the grandfather of the present hon. member for Kindersley (Mr. Larson). I know that all those who are representative of that fine race of people that we had coming into western Canada at that time will be pleased with the fine showing he made at the opening of this session.

I was not able to follow the speech of the seconder owing to the fact that I do not speak any language but English; and some people think I do not speak that language well. But I find that the translation reads just as well as the part of it which was in English and which was of a high character. I wish to congratulate both of these young members in the house upon the showing they made.

The two matters to which I wish to refer directly and which were introduced into the debate at an early period, one by the hon. member for Souris (Mr. Ross) and the other by the hon. member for Melfort (Mr. Wright), are of interest particularly to the people of western Canada. I therefore desire at the very beginning to clear away some impressions that might have been produced by statements which were made.

I recall that when the hon. member for Souris was speaking he quoted an editorial from the *Winnipeg Free Press*. I do not know that he subscribed to what the editorial said, but nevertheless he read it to this house; and a member is supposed to subscribe to everything he reads to the house, particularly when it is critical of government policy.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Do you?

Mr. Gardiner: Yes, I subscribe to most things that I read to the house, unless I declare at the time that I am in disagreement with what they say. Sometimes I am.

The statement was to the effect that the wheat which was exchanged this year from the 140 million bushels which we were required to deliver under the wheat contract, in order to induce the British to purchase from Canada pork products which they otherwise would not have purchased, to induce them to purchase lumber or wood products