

tion in my part of the country. I refer to the excessive spread between the price of the raw material and the price of the finished article. In my letter I dealt with the subject of wool and woollen products, particularly woollen underwear, and I pointed out that wool sold at from 5 to 7 cents a pound, though as a matter of fact some wool is selling for only 4 cents. When we come to buy it back in manufactured form, however, we pay possibly \$2 a pound. I directed attention to the fact that a certain brand of combination underwear weighing 29 ounces cost from \$2.50 to \$2.75 at retail, and there are other examples even more outstanding. Since writing that letter I have heard from a great many people in various parts of the country, many of whom drew attention to the fact that in dealing with wool and woollen products I was laying stress on a comparatively minor matter. At the time I wrote the letter I realized that this was so, but I dealt with wool because some of my people have been selling their raw wool for only 4 cents a pound, and in a cold climate such as we have, woollen underclothing is necessary. I regret to say that a great many of our people are not able to buy it at the prices they are asked to pay at the present time.

The question of hides and finished leather is just as important. I have here a clipping from a weekly newspaper, setting out a letter received from a clerk in a store, who wrote:

A short time ago a farmer came into the store where I am employed, bringing a calf hide. After looking up the market on hides I found the best I could offer him was four cents per pound. The hide weighed $12\frac{3}{4}$ pounds, which equals 51 cents, and in exchange he took one pair of shoe laces at 20 cents, one package of puffed wheat at 16 cents, and one package of health bran at 15 cents.

After the man left the store I began to compare the values of these articles. The laces were the sort used for lacing long boots, and were cut from common everyday calfskin. On weighing these I found there were 24 to the pound at 20 cents per pair, making the cost of \$4.80 per pound. As leather gains five per cent in tanning, the hide would weigh about 16 pounds when finished and would be worth about \$73.60 when cut into laces. So if the farmer wished to buy his same calf hide tanned and cut into laces, he would need to bring in 80 calf hides at 50 cents, plus 60 sheep skins at 40 cents, plus 20 lamb skins at 25 cents, plus 80 pounds of wool at 8 cents, and to make up the balance could hand over \$1.40 cash.

This spread between raw products and finished products is a matter of more than passing importance, and I want to say to the minister that instead of establishing a marketing board, which, to say the least, will be of doubtful success, it would be wise for him to appoint a board to inquire into the spread in

[Mr. R. McKenzie.]

prices. I am sure he could make a name for himself, and I may say, without any offence to the minister, that he needs something to make a name for himself throughout the farming areas of the country—I say, he could make a name for himself if he took advantage of something of this sort and established a board to inquire into the spread in prices. I can assure him that I should be willing to give him all the assistance I could in gathering information.

There is another thing in connection with this spread in prices, and from the letters I have received I may tell the minister that what I am going to say is something the farmers in my part of the country are thinking about. Woollen manufacturers, tanners and other manufacturers throughout Canada are going to suffer very materially unless something is done along this line. Our people in the rural areas are seriously considering going back to the custom of fifty or sixty years ago, because some of them still know something about the spinning of yarns, and they are going to take the wool and make it into clothing themselves. This will be done, not because the people are particularly anxious to do it, but because it is becoming imperative. There are men, women and children in the province from which I come who have not been able to obtain woollen underwear, which is so necessary in that climate. It is very fortunate indeed that we have had mild winters the last two years; otherwise a great many of the people there would have suffered more severely than they have done, because they have not been able to buy woollen underwear. They were given a good deal of cotton stuff last winter through the relief commission, but that is not what they need in that country. In conclusion, I would urge again on the minister that he do something to find out the reasons for this spread in prices. Once more I assure him of my willingness to give him all the assistance in my power in that regard.

Mr. NEILL: I wish to take just a few minutes to suggest to the minister that he put some restraint on his officials in issuing optimistic, not to say flamboyant, highly-coloured descriptions of the profits to be made in the poultry industry. I have in my hand an editorial from a British Columbia poultry paper from which I will read a paragraph or two:

Another statement from the Dominion Department of Agriculture recently issued, says a flock of a hundred birds carefully managed are returning to many a farmer a profit, over feed costs, of from \$200 to \$500 a year, "which is not to be disdained by even the most successful farmers."