

Mr. MOTHERWELL: It is very slight, though. I mention this because we violated the conditions of the contract which entitled us to that preference when we sold wheat not at the world price but at sometimes ten to twelve cents above it, so that preference was liable to be taken away, which is not the case now. I had no opportunity at that time to make this admission, but if it will do my right hon. friend any good I make it now. Possibly I am doing this more for my own sake than for his, but I feel I should say that because of that preference we have a slight edge under certain circumstances. The other advantage is in the quality of our wheat. If in hard times we put our price too high and above competitive prices, the consumers are going to use just as little of our wheat as possible. Wheat must be sold at competitive prices with comparable wheat of other countries. There is no other way to sell it and still get your share of the sales; there never has been any other way and I do not expect there ever will be any other way. An attempt was made, for four years, 1932 to 1935, to sell our wheat in another way, but it failed.

That is about all I wish to say with regard to this question. Now that we have gone into this business of wheat marketing, we do not know for how long, let us all get behind that wheat board and behind any government which may occupy the treasury benches. Let us see that the quality of our wheat surpasses the quality of any other wheat which goes on the market, and in that way we shall be able to offset the disadvantages that are apparent. We are up against the problem of distance, for one thing; our wheat is grown away in the interior of a great continent, far from the ocean no matter which way you look. Then there is the disadvantage of the depreciated currencies, already referred to, of other countries. I think I will leave it at that; I think hon. members are sympathetic with these views, and I just wish to say to the house that this is a situation which cannot be taken care of if we confine this prospective royal commission strictly to what is called marketing, or marketing methods.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think I have gone over that without making very much of a break, though I have had to do some plain and fancy skating, and that will be even more the case in connection with the next subject. If I had any hair, this question of debt would make it stand up, sometimes, when I think of it. The vortex, the maelstrom of debt in which we find ourselves, individually and collectively as a people, did not start yesterday or the day before or after the war. It started early in this century, or maybe before that.

Speaking of the west, which I know more particularly, in the early days we did not have any opportunities of getting into debt because until about 1894 no one would trust us. The early settlers went in there in 1882, and for the next twelve or fourteen years you might as well have asked a moneyed man to take a mortgage on a square mile of sunshine or atmosphere as on a square mile of land. There was an abundance of both, but land had no value as security for a loan until it was demonstrated what the land would do. Then we had a period of fair prices and large crops, and moneylenders crowded the money on to us until it nearly amounted to an orgy. As treasurer of a school district I was in a position to know how this thing was going on, and long before it was known publicly I was horrified at the number of men who were putting mortgages on their land. I often wondered how they were ever going to get them off, when the land became older and dirtier, the equipment worn out and the men themselves older and worn out. As a matter of fact many farmers did pay off their mortgages and then contracted new debts during the war, so they found themselves in a more difficult position than ever.

In the beginning of the borrowing era about 1894, mortgages were taken on a bunch of ponies, or any other chattels, for \$300 or \$400. That was all you could get. Then one or two private banks came in with plenty of capital, which permitted them to take pretty good risks considering the interest that was charged, ranging from 24 to 36 per cent. Then the chartered banks came in, sometimes two or three of them in a town like Indian Head. They would come out on the street and canvass for loans. In the old days of the open bar it used to be, "Come in and have a hooker." The banks said, "Come in and have a thousand, and later on when you sell your wheat you can pay it back." How could frail flesh resist that enticing offer and appeal? Then came the mortgage companies, competing for our business and vying with each other as to which one would give a farmer the largest mortgage. Later many began to find it difficult to pay back the money with interest at eight per cent, nine per cent, or whatever it was.

Then a great agitation arose for the government of Saskatchewan, of which I was a member, to go into the farm loaning business. Four other provinces were induced by pressure of public sentiment to go into the very doubtful business of lending money to their constituents. I do not need to enlarge on what happened to them; I think the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner) knows. I believe