

International Wheat Agreement

strongly, but I think it is important—is that if there were no wheat agreement we would have no means of knowing how much money the United States was prepared to lose in the marketing of export wheat. We have no guaranteed method of knowing now, but I am sure that when they are in the wheat agreement they have some appreciation of their position and their relationship with other countries in so far as the discount they will give in selling their class II wheat, or wheat outside the agreement. Therefore I say this, and I say it after a good deal of thought: that this agreement in itself creates a price structure which is recognized by those who are parties to the agreement, and as such has brought about a measure of stability that we could not have hoped for under any other method. Not only that, but there is the particular position of the United States. What I am saying now should not be looked upon as critical of their policy in any particular way, but the fact still remains that we are in a position where their two-price policy could establish prices outside of the agreement that could materially affect the general world prices.

I come back to what I said at the beginning, namely that this policy of establishing an international wheat pool, if you like, has brought about a measure of stability which is recognized by all the exporting countries, and which is looked upon as a reasonable price relationship in so far as the importing countries are concerned. It does give to the exporters a measure of stability; it is giving to the importing countries a sense of security in that wheat will be available to them. I would even go as far as to say—though perhaps this should not be projected into this debate—there are many other commodities, or at least several others, toward which governments might properly be looking from the international point of view rather than from the point of view of cutthroat competition, things that are of importance and of great significance to people all over the world. The wheat agreement might serve as a workable example when we come to deal with some other very important commodities.

Before I take my seat, Mr. Speaker, I should like to say this. I do not think I can do it adequately at all, but may I say that we have been singularly fortunate in the selection of the personnel that we have been able to secure to operate the Canadian wheat board. It has not been an easy task. These men, from the chairman down, have shown a measure of tolerance, a degree of understanding that has been particularly outstanding. We owe them a very large debt of gratitude for the manner in which they have carried out this very difficult problem of marketing

wheat. Both the producers and the consumers have benefited greatly, and that is proved by the fact that they have been able to continue to talk to one another.

Mr. J. H. Blackmore (Lethbridge): As the hon. member for Battle River (Mr. Fair) has already said, Social Crediters will support this agreement. Of course Canadian farmers ought to have \$2.05 a bushel. Whether Britain ought to pay that price is another matter. The farmers' union believe they should have \$2.35. I believe that figure is not very wide of the mark. According to the Searle letter of April 22 the wheat board is charging \$2.16½ for class II wheat to the world. That would seem to indicate the value which the wheat board places on wheat. As I said, however, whether or not in refusing to pay such prices Britain should be called "sticky" is altogether another matter.

I regret that the word "sticky" was used in the debate. I should like to read some information into the record which I hope will be widely circulated throughout western Canada. I have noticed just a little tendency on the part of certain members to lay the blame on Britain again, just as the blame was laid on Britain some three or four years ago on another occasion. I say that any member who attempts to lay blame upon Britain in this connection ought to be ashamed of himself—

Mr. Howe: What difficulty?

Mr. Blackmore: —because thereby he is doing a disservice to Canada; he is casting a reflection on Britain when she does not deserve it; he is indicating his gross ignorance of economic conditions as they prevail in Britain, and as between Britain and the rest of the world. I have used strong words, but I can prove every one of them. I hope we do not have any more of this thing of going out on the hustings and trying to blame Britain for something that she is almost, if not utterly, helpless to avoid.

As I have indicated, there is a considerable passage in the *Economic Record* issued by the United Kingdom information office in Ottawa in February, 1953, which I propose to put on the record so that western editors may have this information. This publication makes reference to the general food situation in Great Britain, and says:

In a speech delivered in Edinburgh on January 7 to the Scottish grocers federation, Dr. Charles Hill, M.P., parliamentary secretary to the ministry of food, gave a brief survey of the food situation generally. He said that the government were compelled to examine food problems in the light of the present difficulty confronting the country as a whole—the deficit in Britain's balance of payments had to be eliminated before there could be any relaxation of control over expenditure on