

Grain—Deficiency Payments

little political trouble for the government presenting the motion. I would expect that if the Minister of Trade and Commerce, whose department this affects mainly, would stand in his place in the house tonight and announce deficiency payments such as have been requested, the official opposition would unanimously support that announcement. I would certainly hope that would be the case. Certainly the C.C.F. members would support it.

I have heard it said on many occasions in various debates in this house—

Mr. Smallwood: Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Argue: Surely.

Mr. Smallwood: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has been standing in his place preaching like a parrot for the last 15 minutes about the difficulties of the farmer. We are all aware of the facts of the situation. I should like to ask the hon. gentleman what he ever did—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member has been given the floor to ask a question. I suggest that he put his question.

Mr. Smallwood: Mr. Speaker, I should like to know what the hon. member has ever done to remedy the situation in the last four or five years other than to stand there and talk about it.

Mr. Argue: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member will examine my record in the house I think he will find that it compares favourably with the record of any other hon. member on this particular question.

I was about to refer to the many occasions when some of my good friends on the Conservative side of the house and I participated together in various debates and was about to remind them that even with the tough government we had to deal with in those days we were able to make some progress. My hon. friend, as has already been suggested to him, can rise in his place a little later and make whatever submission he wishes.

I have been saying that this proposition is supported by most organizations in the prairie provinces. I have in my hand the submission of the interprovincial farm union council to the federal government dated May 28, 1958. In it they have asked for deficiency payments of approximately but not exactly the same size as those asked for by the wheat pool organizations. In 1955-56 they asked for deficiency payments on wheat of 28 cents per bushel, and in 1956-57 they asked for payments of 26 cents per bushel with appropriate deficiency payments for oats and barley. In this submission they point out by way of their own tables and figures some of the

very things that were pointed out by the wheat pool organizations.

This brief is highly complimentary of the government. It congratulates the government quite frequently. It is very moderate in tone and concludes with a request for deficiency payments. Since the date of presentation of this brief the interprovincial farm union council has returned to Ottawa; in fact, representatives of that organization are here now. I have not been informed whether they have yet interviewed the cabinet as such but they have certainly been interviewing private hon. members from the various parties. They have left with us a memorandum on deficiency payments and other farm issues. The submission is dated July, 1958, and bears the notation that it is submitted to the members of the House of Commons by representatives of the provincial farm unions. I do not intend to quote all of the brief but I shall cite some extracts from it. It speaks about a resolution supporting the sending of a large delegation to Ottawa and then goes on to say:

As you will note, the foregoing resolution is based on the assumption that immediate action was not taken on this matter, following the last federal election. It may be, however, that this is not the case, and we certainly commend those members who have been keeping this farm issue before those responsible. Still, we must stress the fact that until farmers see definite action on these matters, words give cold comfort.

Omitting a paragraph, the brief goes on to say:

Since our submission in May, the final wheat payment for the crop year 1956-57 was announced and proved to be a disappointment to the growers. This price level lends further evidence in support of our reasoning that farmers are carrying an impossible economic load with continued higher costs and progressively lower prices, and there is no evidence of any effort being made to reflect an honest cost-price relationship in the domestic price of wheat.

Omitting the next paragraph and proceeding to the subsequent one, I continue:

We feel therefore that our request for consideration of our position on the basis of our May submission is more than reasonable, and farmers are extremely disappointed that action has not been announced by the Minister of Trade and Commerce.

The brief makes a strong statement in asking for action on the part of the government and a statement by the Minister of Trade and Commerce. There are many reasons why such action should be taken some of which I have outlined. I think the main and over-all reason is that the cost-price relationship has worsened to the point that prairie producers are unable to make a living in that occupation unless action is taken.

However, there are other reasons why action should be taken to come to their assistance, and I refer to the very serious crop outlook