

I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the minister responsible for the Wheat Board took it in reverse. He certainly knocked. When the hon. member for Crowfoot and myself and other members of this chamber told him to get off his fanny and go out into the world and sell wheat, he got off it and he did a job.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Whicher: Let me quote from the annual report of the Canadian Wheat Board for 1971-72. There are accounts here of 110 different countries to which Canada, through the initiative of the Wheat Board, guided by the minister responsible for the same, sold wheat. There are scores of other countries on which the Wheat Board and the minister called but were not successful.

As an easterner, I felt hurt sometimes when I saw what had happened as far as western agriculture and the selling of wheat is concerned. For years and years the people of western Canada asked for a two-price system. Who was responsible for that system? The minister from Saskatoon-Humboldt is the one man in the House of Commons who can say, "I did it—"

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Whicher: I have sometimes disagreed with him. I know that what happens in caucus is very secret. We sometimes have little fights. I know you Conservatives never have them, but in our party we do. I remember fighting with him when it was announced they were going to supply 2,000 extra hopper cars for western Canada, costing to the tune of \$46 million. I asked myself: Who are these cars for? Are they for the cattlemen of Bruce county? Are they for the dairy producers of Quebec? Will they help anybody down in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick or Prince Edward Island? And the answer came thus: No, they are going to help western agriculture, courtesy Otto Lang.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Whicher: Mr. Speaker, I know that for political reasons the opposition must be opposed to the government. I know that the reason this motion was presented today was not with the idea—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but the time allotted to him, plus an extra minute, has expired. If the House gives unanimous consent he may continue.

Some hon. Members: Carry on.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hear a voice say no. The hon. member for Medicine Hat (Mr. Hargrave).

Mr. Whicher: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I think I have made my point.

Mr. Bert Hargrave (Medicine Hat): Mr. Speaker, first, I should like, for the benefit of the hon. member for Bruce (Mr. Whicher), to make one comment about the three bushels for \$1 barley situation. I think this argument

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should be laid to rest once and for all. If barley was so plentiful, and the price so attractive, I wonder why the hon. member wasn't out there with all his friends trying to buy it.

Mr. Lang: And ship it where?

Mr. Hargrave: I was involved in using some of that so-called cheap barley. It was never that cheap. And I would like to say that anybody who ever fed barley did not come through the experience in any way which was a credit to him or to the industry. It was not worth while. Any feeder will tell you that, whether he is feeding cattle or hogs. They do much better on grain at a uniform and higher price. This is the reason the new feed grain policy we are all expecting is so important.

In the short time allotted to me tonight it is not my intention to deal specifically with wheat or wheat marketing. I would like to bring to the attention of the House the close relationship between the beef cattle industry and the grain industry in Canada. The term "grain industry" refers primarily to feed grain as far as I am concerned. But wheat, of course, is also a feed grain. This week in western Canada Canadian feed lots were buying non-board wheat at between \$2 and \$2.20 a bushel, and barley from \$1.05 to \$1.25.

Let me bring to your attention, Mr. Speaker, a brief outline of the condition of the cattle industry in Canada today, after the first quarter of 1973. This is important in the context of the present debate because for too long the cattle industry, the feed grains group and the feeding industry as a whole have been poor relations, the country cousins of the wheat industry. To put it another way, they have provided a residual market for the Wheat Board after export requirements have been satisfied. The beef cattle industry today is the largest single agricultural commodity group in Canada in terms of dollar sales. We sometimes forget this. It is responsible for annual farm gate cash sales amounting to \$1.2 billion. This represents one quarter of the total Canadian farm cash receipts.

Our national beef cattle herd has more than doubled since 1950 to over 12,000,000 head. Starting in the fall of 1951, the Canadian cattle industry received its first meaningful pay raise in 20 years. The year 1951 was the last peak in the cattle cycle prior to last year. Until about a month ago the cattle industry enjoyed the highest price levels in its history. These maximum prices at the retail level coincided with other peak prices for almost all food commodities. We were not alone in that respect. But beef prices made the headlines in all the comments on the cost of living, because beef is such a popular part of our national diet.

There are two fundamental reasons for the present level of beef prices, and these reasons are not generally understood by consumers or even by our own special committee inquiring into food costs. They are high because of what happened or, more properly in my opinion, because of what failed to happen three to five years ago. This was the period in our present cattle cycle when farmers failed to increase their breeding herds. Farmers should not be faulted too seriously for this decision. They did so for one simple reason: there was not a buck in it. Producer cattle prices had not changed substantially at least in some 17 or