

*Supply—Trade and Commerce*

the farmers in getting their proper share of the national income. One of my first questions in this house was in connection with the report that the Australian state of New South Wales had suffered a severe drought and a resultant crop failure. At that time it was suggested that Australia may have to import wheat in order to meet its commitments to other countries. I was chided, not only by some in this house but also by some western newspapers. It has now been publicized quite extensively that that condition exists, and that Australia will in all likelihood import some wheat. The news stories indicate that our sister dominion would prefer Canadian wheat. I should like to read in part a Melbourne Reuters dispatch of December 4 which states:

The Australian wheat board has asked federal government permission to import Canadian wheat, it was reported here tonight.

Board Chairman Sir John Teasdale said the shipments would go to New South Wales and Queensland, whose own wheat crops had been hit by drought.

Teasdale said Canadian wheat could be shipped to New South Wales and Queensland at about the same price as western Australian wheat could be transported to those states.

When I asked the minister a few days ago whether or not he had taken any steps to sell wheat to Australia I received the off-hand answer that if Australia wanted wheat we would sell it to her. Where is that aggressive policy that was mentioned only a few weeks ago? I suggest to the minister that we cannot sit around and expect customers to come to us. The United States has already announced a new disposal program, and I am afraid unless some direct, aggressive action is taken to obtain this contract for wheat sales to Australia, we may even lose that. I suggest, in all deference, that the minister who, it seems, is quite able to make trips to other parts of the world might at least send someone to Australia, if necessary, to make sure this contract is tied up right now.

The western farmers are looking to this government for the kind of action that was promised, an aggressive sales policy. The farmers have piles of wheat taking up valuable space on their farms, in their machine sheds, cattle barns and expensive granaries. Some wheat has been stored for many years. They are asking for the new kind of aggressive sales policy that was indicated would come after the change in government. When the first story appeared in the newspapers about this Australian crisis it was indicated that possibly 50 million bushels might be required. The latest story indicates that it is already too late to import that amount, so

[Mr. Lewry.]

possibly we have already lost a good part of the amount we could have sent as a result of this lackadaisical attitude.

An extensive program is necessary as our farmers all across Canada are still only getting less than half of the share of the national income to which they are entitled. One out of six Canadians is a farmer, and he should get \$1 out of every \$6 of national income. But at the present time he is getting less than \$1 out of every \$15, or less than half of that to which he is entitled.

Under the former Liberal government the so-called Liberal prosperity forced 15 per cent of our farmers off their land. This applies to eastern and western farmers alike. Cattle prices have fallen in the east as well as the west, and at the same time prices of farm machinery have been increasing steadily. A few years ago a farmer could have purchased a new hay baler with the proceeds of the sale of four 1,000-pound steers. It now takes the equivalent of ten steers. In the west a medium sized tractor could have been purchased a few years ago with the money from the sale of 1,600 bushels of wheat. Today it takes 2,800 bushels to buy that same machine.

There are hundreds of farmers who have many thousands of bushels of wheat stored on their farms. Every day they see the foodstuffs required by people in other parts of the world going to waste in their barns. They were led to believe that a new policy would be implemented, but today we still have the same old procedure. It is the younger farmers in the west today who are suffering the most. It takes thousands of dollars to get a proper set-up for good farming. A few weeks ago in my own constituency I found several young farmers who had recently started in business facing virtual bankruptcy, yet they had wheat in storage. It is not their fault that the government fails to have the proper sales technique or ability to sell, yet they are forced to virtually subsidize the federal government by storing their own wheat. This policy has another discriminating feature; it is making big farms bigger and the small farmers are being forced out of business. I suggest to the minister that the farmers expect him to do his duty. They are past the stage of accepting any more promises, they want action now and they need action or they will be adding to the increasing unemployment problem across Canada.

May I say that even if this pile of wheat were all sold today, and it is the duty of the minister to sell it, the plight of the western farmer would not be relieved entirely. Depressed conditions would still exist, because