

Supply—Agriculture

Britain, including the wheat agreement, specify that we are to be paid in Canadian dollars. Britain will pay us in Canadian dollars and therefore the farmer will get the same number of dollars for his wheat and for his other products as he is getting. I think that has been stated by nearly all of the experts who are not employed by the government and who write the financial pages of the papers across the country. As far as I have been able to read, they have made a statement to that effect. There is a possibility that the action which we took may be of some benefit to the farmers on the long-time wheat agreement. I am not going to attempt to explain how much that will be or what it will be. I do not think anyone can at this moment tell what it will be or what the exact result of the action is going to be. All I can say is that I satisfied myself, before agreeing with what we were doing, that it was going to be in the interests of all of the people of Canada, including the farmer, to do that particular thing. I think that is all I care to say at the moment.

Mr. Herridge: I am going to speak briefly, but in view of the concern of my farmer constituents—fruit growers, poultry producers and others—about the insecurity of the future with regard to markets, I feel that I should make a few comments.

I realize that the Minister of Agriculture has one of the most responsible positions in Canada at this time. I am quite sure that any fair-minded person would sympathize with him in the problem he is facing, under present world conditions, in attempting to find outlets and markets for Canadian agricultural production. In reviewing the main estimates I regret to notice that those of such an important department show a reduction of \$10,635,000. I think that is unfortunate when we consider the basic importance of the agricultural economy to the prosperity of Canada as a whole.

At the present time we hear a great deal about the arsenals of democracy. But I want to preface my few remarks by saying that finally, after all we have done and all that we can do in the nature of armed defence, in my opinion the basic arsenals of democracy rest in agriculture. The peace of the world and the security of the peoples of the world are to be found, finally and fundamentally, in well-fed, well-clothed, well-housed and contented people.

The agriculturist is faced with a dilemma at this time. To reduce production is unthinkable, in my opinion. Yet in some industries, particularly in the fruit industry, there is some thought of reducing production in certain varieties because of lost markets. In that connection I wish to quote briefly from our

British Columbia farm paper *Country Life*. The article deals with the question of production and increase in production.

How can a reconciliation of these factors be effected? The answer is not available but progress is being made towards working it out. Note this: "Less than ten per cent of the world's food production is exchanged today between country and country, representing only three-quarters of the volume before the war," so the FAO council reports. A large share of the present movement originates in North America. Naturally, variations in output in Canada and the United States have now a greater effect on supplies and prices in the producing countries and entail more serious consequences for consumers elsewhere than would be the case if the volume of international trade were greater and were more widely distributed between suppliers throughout the world.

At a time when hundreds of millions are still hungry, the inability of the world to devise policies which would enable the surplus-producing countries to avoid a deliberate curtailment of efficient production, should not be tolerated, the FAO council proclaims and every humanitarian will agree with it.

No question presents a greater problem to the minister and to all of us, sir, than the welfare of agriculture in Canada at this time. I hold in my hand a report of the department of agriculture of British Columbia for 1948. This report deals with the question of increasing world population in relation to a declining agricultural production. While this is a very complex question—I do not think the solution is going to be easy or simple—we must recognize certain principles in approaching it. I think the first one is this. We profess to the world that we are a Christian nation, a Christian democracy. In view of that, do we think that we can see starving millions of the world go without food because we will not produce it? No doubt the question will be faced from the ordinary commercial point of view. The minister and his officials will do what they can do to find markets through the regular channels; they will try to make sales agreements and so on. But if we are going to face this problem satisfactorily and find even a partial solution in the near future we have to do some unorthodox things. We have to convince the Canadian people that the stability and the prosperity of the Canadian nation depend on a stable agriculture. If that is going to be possible under present conditions all of the Canadian people must make some contribution to the stabilization of our agriculture and to the sale of our commodities. Therefore, Mr. Chairman, in a few words I suggest that in addition to finding a market through normal channels, commercial bulk sales agreements, or personal trading, we have got to be willing to supply these people who require food with food when they require it and where they require it, in other ways: in the first instance on long-term loans