

The Budget—Mr. Argue

unable now to cope with surpluses as was the government in the thirties. The editorial goes on to say that—

Mr. Abbott: Oh, oh—the editorial again.

Mr. Argue: Does the minister want to object? I am paraphrasing it.

Mr. Abbott: Oh, I see.

Mr. Argue: I am not quoting it. The editor goes on to say that surely this is something that should be corrected, and that it is a reflection upon Canada and the government when the government cannot solve the problem of the huge surpluses of food in a world that is hungry.

Anyway, we saw the four cabinet ministers going to Washington. And when the Minister of Trade and Commerce made his statement one of the phrases he used—and I am paraphrasing again, so that it will not offend the minister—

Mr. Abbott: You do not have to paraphrase that.

Mr. Argue: Anyway they said that they were advancing on a bold front.

Mr. Abbott: A wide front.

Mr. Argue: I would like to know what was accomplished in Washington, because if anything was accomplished we were not told about it. And how would the government expect to accomplish very much in going to Washington? The Minister of Trade and Commerce gets up day after day in the house and says that everything is fine, that markets are good, that the economy is buoyant, that farm income is at the highest peak and that the outlook is bright. Then he goes down to Washington and says, "We are having all kinds of trouble; would you help us out?" I can just imagine someone quoting some of the statements of the Minister of Trade and Commerce back to him. Then the ministers decide that in order that they might come back with at least a mouse they should decide on agreeing to issue a most innocuous press release that says absolutely nothing.

Here is a situation fraught with great danger for Canada. The over-all surplus of wheat on February 1 in the four major exporting countries was 1,907 million bushels. The Minister of Agriculture says: "Well, the thing to do with this big surplus—and of course the farmers will do it—is to turn some of it into meat." Every economist in the Department of Agriculture right now is advising the minister that the price of hogs is going to go down very drastically this fall, with the larger number of hogs coming on the market.

Would the Minister of Agriculture suggest that the farmers feed more cattle? In 1951 Canada's cattle population was 8,400,000. Last year it was up to 9,800,000. The cattle population of this continent has increased from 90.4 million to a present 105 million head, the largest number of cattle in the history of North America. Cattle numbers have gone up tremendously in the last two years, and the price of cattle has fallen. What is going to happen? What would happen if farmers fed increased quantities of grain to livestock? I know what would happen, and the Minister of Agriculture must realize what would happen. There would be another further drastic drop in cattle and hog prices.

The debates centring around the export of wheat today remind me of the debates that took place in this house in 1946, 1947 and 1948, when C.C.F. members were warning the government that they were losing the British market for Canadian bacon, cheese and other farm products. What were we told? We were told that it was nonsense; that we were not losing the British market. Well, history now shows that the members of the C.C.F. were right. The British market has been lost as a direct result of the economic policies of the Minister of Finance of this country. And markets will continue to be lost so long as we demand hard currency dollars that our customers have not got.

The Minister of Finance has his ideas of finance and trade. I have different ideas. My ideas are just simple ones. I believe that when one nation has huge surplus quantities of food and people in other nations are hungry and suffering from malnutrition, it is our duty and their duty to take whatever financial and other steps that may be necessary to move our surplus food to feed people who need it. The people in the United Kingdom could use Canadian food.

Two-thirds of the people of the world are hungry. We have so much food on this continent that farmers are fearful of the future, and yet this government does not make a single, financial move to get rid of any real part of those burdensome surpluses. Oh, they went to the United States and held a big conference and came back. They say they are advancing on a bold front, but we are not told where they are going. The Minister of Finance I suppose gave part of the broad advance in his budget the other night, and that was a depression budget if I ever read one because in it was one very