

The reason given is that the Government were so acting at the request of the British authorities. Now, the day following, strange to say, the press had an announcement from Great Britain to the effect that there had been no such demand from the British authorities. The following appeared in the press of Canada on the 30th November:

The official press bureau made the following statement yesterday:

'With reference to the announcement from Ottawa on November 28, that the Canadian Government had commandeered 16,000,000 bushels of wheat at the request of the British Government, the Board of Agriculture state that the British Government have made no such request, and that at present they have no information on the subject.'

There is something extraordinary in this, and it is a most surprising fact that from the 30th November to the present day no attempt has been made to explain this discrepancy. I have seen statements in the press—not official, however, because the Government has not made them—to the effect that the wheat has been commandeered for the allied nations. Which nations? Great Britain? No; we have the information that Great Britain did not make such a request. Russia? Certainly not; Russia does not want our wheat; she is a large exporter of wheat. France? I am told on pretty good authority that the French Government have already taken measures to buy wheat in Canada, not through the intervention of the Canadian Government, but through the ordinary channels of trade. I am told, but of this I have no positive information—I may be wrong, but I have it on authority which I consider respectable—that some of the wheat which was commandeered, and which was in the elevators at the head of lake Superior, already belonged to France and had been purchased for the French Government.

Possibly this wheat may be intended for the Italian Government; but, Sir, if the wheat were bought for any of these governments, why did we not have an official statement as we had on the 30th of November in regard to the British Government? I firmly believe that the Allied nations are buying wheat to-day in Canada—not a paltry 17,000,000 bushels, but perhaps hundreds of millions of bushels—and they are doing it through the ordinary channels of trade. If the Allied nations wanted wheat from Canada, why were the ordinary channels of trade not made use of? Why was the trade disturbed as it was? Why was this dislocation of business allowed?

This is a mystery which has not been explained up to the present time. There is no doubt whatever that the action of the Government has had the effect—which should have been anticipated, whatever may be the motive behind it—of dislocating business and of interfering with interests existing at the head of lake Superior. It has been stated by the millers that they were put back in their operations, and they flocked to Ottawa in order to get redress. They obtained redress and the wheat that belonged to the millers was unmolested. Then the transaction was reviewed by some of the business men; and one of the largest operators on the lakes, Mr. Richardson of Kingston, is reported to have spoken as follows, according to the Ottawa Free Press of November 30:

'The wheat could easily have been purchased on the open market,' said Mr. Richardson, of Kingston, this morning. 'It was not necessary to take such drastic action.'

'How could the grain have been purchased by the government without artificially boosting the prices?' Mr. Richardson was asked.

'By the use of brains,' Mr. Richardson curtly replied. 'The government bought oats at a time when there was a scarcity in Great Britain. They went about it quietly and succeeded in purchasing a large amount without boosting the prices. I myself bought two and a half millions of Du ham wheat when there was only four millions available. I didn't advertise the fact and managed to make its purchase without prices being raised. It wasn't necessary to throw the whole grain and flour trade into a turmoil by taking the drastic action taken.'

'Seventeen million bushels of the wheat taken was contracted for,' continued Mr. Richardson, 'and no compensation is to be given for that.'

Here is the important part:

No man will be sure of a contract in the future, for nobody knows when a similar action is going to be sprung at any time later. However, it is done, and can't be undone.

I make no charge—I never make any charge until the fact has been shown to me, and then I can judge for myself whether a transaction is right or wrong—I make no charge to-day, but I say to the Government that their action has given rise to suspicions. My hon. friend the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Sir George Foster) resented those suspicions, and he wrote a rather irate letter to the Ottawa Citizen to protest the purity of his intentions. I make no charge against my hon. friend the Minister of Trade and Commerce or against anybody else, but it is his own fault if it has been supposed that in that pile of wheat there is an Ethiopian concealed. The