

Wheat

this will affect our position in the British market. I would not expect our position to be seriously affected.

If our position is seriously affected, I am sure we will be entitled to ask for a readjustment in the international wheat agreement quotas. From my association with the United States over eighteen years, I feel quite satisfied that if we have a case for readjustment that case will get consideration in that country. I am glad that the matter has been raised. I think it is unfortunate that these rumours of disaster are put out. They upset the producers of wheat, and to no good purpose whatever. I can assure you that the wheat board will tell the world if our situation is deteriorating. I do not think it is. We knew about this situation in advance, and the wheat board was consulted. It is not a situation that causes any particular terror to anyone concerned with the selling of Canadian wheat.

Mr. Argue: I wonder if I might ask a question?

Mr. Harkness: Could the minister tell us if he has had any information from the United States government as to the amount of wheat they are prepared to put on the market at prices, we will say, down to \$1.55?

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): What kind of a question is that? Why would they consult us? I do know how much wheat they have. I know they do not intend to put it on the market at \$1.55. I hope the hon. member is not going to join this brigade that spreads terror in the minds of the wheat producers. We are selling wheat at a price we think is reasonable for the producer of wheat under these conditions of surplus. We think the buyers of wheat feel that it is a reasonable price. So far as I know, I do not expect any radical departure up or down from that price under these circumstances.

Mr. Harkness: I am sorry, but the minister has not answered the question that I asked him in perfect good faith.

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): I can tell my hon. friend that in the United States there is close to one billion bushels of wheat. Whether they are going to sell it at their domestic price, or at the price they are selling now, or at \$1.55, I cannot tell him. I think he has to guess that for himself, if he wishes to indulge in guessing.

Mr. Harkness: The minister has no information, then?

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): No.

Mr. Harkness: That is all I wanted to know.

[Mr. Howe (Port Arthur).]

Mr. F. S. Zaplitny (Dauphin): The statement of the Minister of Trade and Commerce was, as usual, an optimistic one, and I hope that events will bear him out. However, I believe that this question is a little more serious than it would appear from the statement that has just been made. I also want to refer to the *Winnipeg Free Press*, and I want to assure the minister that my opinion of their marketing policies is pretty much the same as his. However, I am not going to quote an opinion from this paper, but what is supposed to be a fact. Incidentally this statement is dated December 7, 1953. It starts off by saying:

Governments of the world's major food exporting countries are keeping a close eye on foreign marketings of surplus United States' farm products.

There is no doubt at all that behind this move that has been started in the United States there is more than subsidizing a few million bushels of wheat. Farther down the item they say:

The Commodity Credit Corporation, meanwhile, holds almost \$4,500 million worth of surplus produce and congress may be glad to see some of it unloaded abroad at low prices.

That I would assume to be based on fact. If it is, then there is greater danger to the whole concept of orderly marketing than has been indicated in the minister's reply. I believe that it could be the thin edge of the wedge that could spell the end of orderly marketing as we understand it.

In Manitoba the farmers are very much concerned about this whole question and I assure you, Mr. Speaker, that a statement should have been made in this house earlier than this, setting out all the information that has been obtained. A statement has been made today. It does not answer all the questions. For example, there is the question of price intended for this wheat that is to be subsidized, which is still a matter of speculation. One paper says one thing and another another. According to the *Globe and Mail*, for example, the price will be \$1.55. The Minister of Trade and Commerce says it will not be \$1.55. Now, if someone is in a position to make an authoritative statement on it, it should be made.

This news came before the public just about the time that the farmers of Manitoba—that is the Farmers Union of Manitoba—were having their annual convention. It is a body which now represents approximately 35,000 farmers in that province. The statement got an immediate response from the president of the union who, since this appeared in the press, asked that there be a system of subsidized wheat in Canada.