

Agricultural Products Act

\$1.75 a bushel for his wheat. See how much better we have done with our government wheat board, and how much superior it is to the open system of marketing."

I happened to grow some rye last year, and therefore it is a subject in which I am interested. I went to work and secured the figures—

Mr. Gardiner: Was that the first year?

Mr. Harkness: Yes, that was the first year.

Mr. Gardiner: You got badly soaked with that speculation.

Mr. Harkness: As a matter of fact, I am not a bit dissatisfied with what I received for rye last year, the very year on which the Minister of Agriculture was offering the farmers so much commiseration. I actually got \$1.49½ a bushel for my rye in Calgary. That was my return.

Mr. Nicholson: What was your seed worth?

Mr. McCullough (Assiniboia): You will be less satisfied this year.

Mr. Harkness: I think that is about as much as I would have got in my part of the country if I had been growing wheat and received \$1.75 a bushel, basis Fort William, No. 1 northern. Of course, as the minister knows, there are certain advantages in growing rye over growing wheat, but I will not go into them now. In order to have the whole picture, I took the monthly average prices for rye from August, 1945, up to February of this year. The price rose from \$1.53½ in August, 1945, to a high in 1948 of \$4.47½, and then dropped down to its present level. If you add those figures together and divide by the number of months you arrive at the average price that farmers received for rye during the period of the wheat agreement. The wheat growers are going to get \$1.75 a bushel, while the average price for rye during that period is \$2.72 a bushel; in other words, just about \$1 a bushel more than the wheat farmer received for his wheat marketed by a government-controlled board.

As I say, quite frankly I am in the farming business in order to make a living out of it, and if I can get \$2.72 a bushel through one system of marketing, and a similar product which ordinarily sells at a higher price will only bring me \$1.75 a bushel, about \$1 a bushel less, through another type of marketing, then I am not in favour of that other type of marketing.

Mr. Gardiner: Is my hon. friend aware of the fact that the only time wheat was ever higher than it was in the last five years was during the period when we had controls at the end of the first great war?

Mr. Harkness: I have been following the price of wheat fairly closely all my life.

Mr. Gardiner: That is correct.

Mr. Harkness: I am quite aware of what the price of wheat was, but that has nothing to do with this particular matter.

Mr. Gardiner: My hon. friend says that he is in favour of the system which will bring the farmer the most money. The system that has brought him the most money up to the present time is the control system of those two periods.

Mr. Harkness: Of course that is where the minister and I differ radically in our opinions. I do not think that the control system brought the farmer the most money. In fact I am absolutely certain, as are a very large number of other people, that if farmers had been able to sell their wheat freely, as they wished, during the last four years, in other words, since the present wheat agreement came into effect in 1945, they would have had several hundred millions more in their pockets than they have at the present time. If the minister had done the same thing with rye as he did with wheat, and put it under some sort of restrictions and regulations, there is no doubt in the world that farmers who grew rye would have received an average of about \$1.50 a bushel in the last four-year period instead of actually getting \$2.72 a bushel.

I find that whenever one speaks on the subject of marketing grain it is necessary to make it quite clear that one is not speaking on behalf of the Winnipeg grain exchange. I have said that on several occasions in the house, and I should like to repeat it now. I do not care if the Winnipeg grain exchange is closed tomorrow, but I care very much that my grain, and particularly my coarse grains, are not put under the complete control of a government-operated board. I want to be in the position to sell them otherwise if I wish to do so. I want especially to be in the position where I can sell them to my neighbours and they can sell them to me.

As far as the general economic situation is concerned, as it affects agriculture, it was covered very thoroughly this morning by the hon. member for Neepawa (Mr. Bracken). Therefore I shall not go into that phase of the question. I should like to address myself more particularly to an examination of the reasons why the act was passed in the beginning, the grounds on which the Minister of Agriculture tried to sell it to the country at that time, and the present situation in which we find ourselves. The act was passed in 1947. At that time the purpose of the act was stated very clearly by the Minister of Agri-