

*Wheat*

our own program may have on world politics and, indeed, on the whole free world.

It seems to me that the federal governments we have had in this country have never come to grips with the problem of conservation. I feel that this measure may be perhaps, to some extent, an awakening to the need for conservation of our soil in this country because, in effect, it will make it possible for the people in the hazardous occupation of agriculture to have a small degree of assistance in respect to their occupation.

Agriculture, of course, is a very hazardous occupation. When the farmer sows his grain, he has no way of being assured that he will reap a harvest. He has to take the chance on all the hazards in connection with the growing of that crop. Anyone connected with agriculture will realize that these are varied and many. He has to depend upon good weather, the vagaries of nature, rust, insects, pests and weeds and everything connected with the growing of wheat. To date the agriculturists and the people who are producing wheat in this country have to a great measure met the challenge of modern methods of production. Today western agriculture is highly mechanized and highly scientific. We have found ways and means of producing larger crops. In order to grow bigger crops, we have also learnt how to cultivate new strains of grain, how to spray our crops in order to eliminate weeds and, of course, with new varieties and new techniques of production, I think we have met the production problem.

The greatest problem facing the agriculturists and the farmers of the west is one of price. I feel that agriculture is in a precarious position. If any hon. member of this house feels that the whole economy of this country is not closely dependent on the prosperity and the health of agriculture, he has been very badly misled. If we do not have a prosperous agricultural economy, or the 10 or 12 per cent of the people engaged in agriculture are not in a prosperous condition, it will affect the whole Canadian economy. Indeed, I recall that in 1945, when I came to this house, we saw a delegation come to this parliament building and meet some of the cabinet ministers. It was a labour delegation interested in the welfare of over 6,000 workers who were unemployed in the farm machinery industry.

So it is that we welcome this resolution today which proposes to pay storage on 178 million bushels of wheat at the end of the crop year. I would like to see this legislation made a permanent piece of legislation and a permanent policy for this country. I would like to see it extended so that it would

include a greater amount of wheat and so that we would have a proper vision of the picture, so that, instead of a nominal 178 million bushels, all wheat in Canada would become the property of the people of Canada and be stored at the expense of the federal treasury. What I have in mind is the picture of an ever-normal granary where we would store, having produced the wheat, not only enough for our domestic consumption, which is around 70 million bushels per annum, but also sufficient to meet all the sales we can achieve and, indeed, in the years of plenty, so that we would store for the years of scarcity. This government is rather short-sighted when it cannot even read the biblical treatment of this subject, in which we are told that in Egypt in the years of plenty they stored for the years of scarcity. So I think we should ask this government at this time to take a second look at this legislation and include in the bill means by which this government would take over all the farm grain and, as the hon. member for Assiniboia indicated this afternoon, take over also coarse grains and barley that farmers may wish to deliver to the wheat board.

As I have already indicated, this is a step in the right direction. I welcome it on that basis, but I feel that some responsibility for this problem has been accepted at long last by the government simply because the government knows that agriculture today, in every phase, is in a precarious position—our livestock marketing, our hogs, our beef and our grain as well. I wish to speak particularly about the grain situation because that is what this measure deals with. I asked this government for a return showing the number of trade commissioners the government had sent to posts in various parts of the world. The return indicated that there were 85 trade commissioners at 54 posts abroad. I asked how many of these commissioners were appointed with exclusive instructions to sell Canadian wheat and I was astounded to learn that not one single trade commissioner had been posted for the express purpose of selling Canadian wheat. When agriculture is our primary industry I think there should be at least some trade commissioners posted abroad whose explicit and sole duty will be to sell Canadian wheat. If that had been done it is my opinion we would not need to be worrying today about how our farmers are going to get some cash in their pockets in order to carry on their business and pay their debts.

I have said something about the government waking up to the problem confronting agriculture in this country. I know now that in some measure the government is waking up to the depletion of our forest resources and is at long last realizing that we need