

And what effect had it had on the livestock of the country? Let me tell the house. Because of the government contracts with respect to much of our agricultural products, contracts to sell these products overseas in Britain at fixed prices—because of this, the farmers found themselves tied to more or less fixed prices for the things they had to sell. Then the government came along with its changed policy which allowed their costs of feed to go up approximately fifty per cent, until now the beef industry, the hog industry, the poultry industry, the dairy industry, most of these branches of agriculture find that they cannot make money. Some of them are losing money, many of them getting out of the livestock business. The livestock industry is almost in a state of complete collapse in Canada today.

That is one of the chief reasons for the present situation, and there is no satisfactory explanation for the government's action at that time, nor can there be. To illustrate the feeling of the farmers, I should like to read two paragraphs from a letter which I received from the Manitoba federation of agriculture, a letter which was sent to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Abbott), the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner) and the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. MacKinnon).

This letter states in part:

Manitoba farmers are angry about the recent removal of ceilings and subsidies on coarse grains. This action was taken without any apparent provision for the welfare of the livestock, dairy and poultry farmers. Irreparable harm has already been done to these industries. Farmers are continuing to liquidate young animals and breeding stock.

Let me interpolate here to give one illustration as to what is happening. Last year in a few months' time 22,000 sows were sold. This year, in the same months, twice as many have been sold. This means that people are going out of the industry. But the letter from the agricultural federation continues:

We demand that in the interests of Manitoba farmers your government correct this situation immediately by either (1) re-negotiating the British contract prices on a basis sufficient to cover recent increases in cost of production; (2) opening of the American market for export of livestock; (3) subsidizing the producer of livestock, dairy and poultry products to bring them in line with current prices of coarse grains.

At this point let me say a further word with respect to wheat. In the 1946 crop year the government's gambling with this crop lost seventy-seven cents a bushel for the grain growers and this year it is likely to lose \$1 a bushel for them. Last year the government lost for these farmers \$123 million, and in these two years together, last year and this year, the figure of losses may be \$300 million.

I say we must keep the wheat board. This party brought that measure into effect in Canada and we shall always retain it. I say, let the farmers have a choice of that board or of the open market. From August 1 next, let the farmers have an option either of the wheat board price or of the open market price. Never in my life have I supported the grain exchange and never did it support me, and I was in a government out there for twenty years. And it opposed us in the last federal election. I am not now speaking for them, Mr. Speaker. If there is any other way we can let the farmers get the open-market price, let us have it. But if we are to have governments and government boards gambling with the farmers' grain and losing a dollar a bushel each year of the farmers' money, I say that we have no choice but to give to the grain farmers the option to use either the wheat board or the open market.

I come now to a reference in the speech from the throne to the question of mutual assistance.

Mr. BRYCE: Might I ask the hon. gentleman a question?

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order.

An hon. MEMBER: One at a time.

Mr. BRYCE: The hon. gentleman can say either yes or no.

Mr. BRACKEN: Go ahead with your question.

Mr. BRYCE: Was the hon. gentleman quoting from his letter from the Manitoba federation of agriculture when he talked about the grain exchange?

Mr. BRACKEN: No.

Mr. BRYCE: Thank you.

Mr. ROSS (Souris): They do not know which way they are going out there.

Mr. BRYCE: I know what road I am going.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order.

Mr. BRACKEN: I wish to refer just for a moment to one passage in the speech from the throne, namely the passage having reference to the question of mutual assistance. The government says it will continue as far as possible to grant mutual assistance but that under present circumstances it does not see how we can continue what we have been doing. Farther on, the text says:

Canada, nevertheless, remains one of the few great producing countries with capacities unimpaired by the war.