

Position of Agricultural Industry

different position from those in the secondary industries, who can determine the prices they shall receive for their products; and they usually get those prices. They can figure all their cost factors, something the farmer is not always able to do. We might say that most of the farmer's problems are concerned with the uncertainty of the elements and the uncertainty of having a crop. Of course the government might say that it cannot control the elements and cannot say how much rain should fall or how much frost should be kept away. But there is one thing the government can do. It can so legislate as to give and guarantee to the farmer a fair price for his production. That is not dependent upon the elements at all. It is an economic factor which a proper and adequate government policy can provide for the farmer.

Over the years the farmer has perhaps had a greater struggle than any other industrial producer in the country. We all recall the days when the grain exchange had things pretty well its own way. Those who were responsible for the selling of wheat on the grain exchange had certain protection. Whether it was elevator organizations, flour mills or banks, whoever was in the grain selling business, they were always able to protect themselves against great losses. But there once again the farmer was at the mercy of markets and prices and those who sold his grain. The farmers began to take action, and as we all know they began to organize, as was only right, and the wheat pool movement was brought into existence.

Over the years the wheat pools have done a good deal for the farmers, but once again the wheat pools are largely dependent upon prices. We all realize what happened as a result of the 1929 stock market crash which brought about the world-wide depression. The wheat pools found themselves in tremendous difficulty. They faced the difficulty of a falling market, and having already arranged to pay the farmer a certain initial price they had to borrow in order to do so. They found themselves in debt to the tune of about \$22 million. The provincial governments of the west came to their assistance, and eventually the wheat pools were able to wipe out the deficit. I relate these facts, Mr. Speaker, to indicate the struggle of the farmer and the fact that in all his struggles he has had in the end to rely upon prices over which he had no control.

The crash, the depression that followed and the crises which the wheat pools went through in those days taught another lesson, and after further struggle another advance was made in the bringing into existence of the Canadian wheat board. I think the

majority of the farmers of the west are glad the wheat board was brought into existence. It was an attempt to protect the farmer so far as the selling of his grain was concerned, and to give him a more stabilized price system. But even so the farmer has little or nothing to say with respect to the price that he should get for his wheat.

I was interested to receive the other day a number of resolutions passed at the annual convention of the farmers' union of Alberta last December. I was rather amazed to find that a number of them dealt with prices. For the purposes of the record I should like to read one or two of them. I shall only read those that have to do with prices, because that is what we are concerned with particularly in this debate. The first resolution reads as follows:

Whereas for some years past the domestic price of wheat for Canadian consumption has been fixed at the same level as wheat sold under the international wheat agreement, and

Whereas during this whole period farm costs and the Canadian price level have risen continuously and the Canadian wheat producers of the prairie region have thus been forced to subsidize the consumers of the whole of Canada, and

Whereas there is no just reason why this should continue;

Therefore be it resolved that the domestic price of wheat consumed in Canada should be raised immediately to \$2.25 per bushel, basis No. 1 Northern at Fort William, and revised annually in relation to the costs of production.

It has already been mentioned by previous speakers that while there has been a decline in farm prices there has been an incline in the cost of production. Here is another resolution concerning the establishment of floor prices which reads as follows:

Whereas the present wide spread in floor prices between eastern and western cattle markets is a serious injustice to western stock raisers, and

Whereas the present temporary floor price does not allow eastern stock men to plan for the future or stabilize their industry, and

Whereas prevailing prices on lower grades of butcher cattle bear no relation to their true value, and spreads between eastern and western markets are excessive on these grades also, and

Whereas retail prices on meat have not dropped in proportion to the price of cattle, and consequently the increased consumption of meat which should have developed has not materialized;

Therefore be it resolved that the farmers' union of Alberta requests that the dominion government establish floor prices on all western markets at the same level as floor prices in Toronto and Montreal, and that an investigation be held as to why the retail meat prices have not fallen in proportion to the prices of live cattle.

So much for wheat and so much for cattle. We come now to another product produced by the farmer, and here is a short resolution