

*Canadian Wheat Board Act*

It has been estimated by various members how much the farmer has lost. I do not think anyone will ever know precisely but it runs into hundreds of millions of dollars. We know that the floor price under the international wheat agreement for the coming year is \$1.54 in Canadian funds; yet we have the government setting an initial price 14 cents a bushel below the floor price in the international agreement, and that may well be all the farmer will get; I do not know.

Before Easter the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe) explained why that might be all he would get. At the end of the 1950-51 crop year the wheat board would very likely have a considerable carry-over of wheat that would have to be marketed in the first months of the next year, being a year when the floor price under the international agreement fell another 10 cents a bushel. The government is therefore playing it safe. They are not risking anything in their present legislation. But the result of a drop of 35 cents a bushel in the initial price for wheat, a further loss of our international markets for wheat, along with the loss of a great many other markets for agricultural products, may spell such a substantial reduction in the standard of living in western Canada that it will affect all of the people from one coast of this country to the other.

I think we are getting in a vicious circle. The government adopts certain policies from time to time. We have no industries in western Canada. We have a policy adopted like this one that will mean a lowering of our economic standard. Then we have an exodus of people and we lose some of our seats in the House of Commons. Everyone who sits in this house knows that if any part of Canada wants to get a square deal it has to have an effective voice in parliament. When you lose population you lose seats; and when you lose seats you lose influence with the government of the day. Then when we do have some natural resources like oil in Alberta the first thing the government arranges is to take it out of that area to other parts of Canada and the United States.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I feel that the government should reconsider its wheat policy. If the present wheat policy is adopted, if nothing is done to arrest the losing of our agricultural markets, all the government will succeed in doing is to establish a depressed area on the prairies, the same kind of depressed area we had before the war. In my opinion, if that should result, it will certainly not be in the

best interests of Canada, and the government should adopt a wheat policy so that such a condition will not obtain.

**Mr. Victor Quelch (Acadia):** Mr. Speaker, I am going to be quite brief in my remarks. There are a number of questions that I want to raise but I shall leave them until we get into the committee stage of the resolution.

We in this group support the resolution because we are of the opinion that it is in the interests of the people of Canada, and more especially in the interests of the grain growers of Canada, that the wheat board continue to operate as a hundred per cent marketing agency for all wheat grown in Canada. Moreover we believe that the permit book and quota system is the fairest way of handling deliveries of grain in western Canada. It always amuses me when I hear people commiserating with the farmers for being compelled to sell their wheat to the wheat board, instead of being allowed to choose what market they want, because I have always found that ninety-nine times out of a hundred these people are not farmers and are far more concerned about the welfare of the grain trade and the grain exchange than about the welfare of the farmers.

I always feel that if the day should come when we make the selling of wheat optional, and permit the decision whether it be sold to the wheat board or on the open market, we shall have signed the death warrant of the wheat board. Furthermore I am satisfied that an overwhelming majority of farmers in western Canada are solidly behind the wheat board today, and in my view the personnel of that board is to be highly commended for the efficient way it has handled the farmers' wheat in the past.

It is true that we hear many people criticize the wheat board on the ground that they lost money for the farmers by subsidizing the British consumer and the Canadian consumer during the time of the British wheat agreement. It is unquestionably true that the farmers did suffer heavy losses as a result of that action. But the mistake these people make is that they blame the wheat board for that situation, instead of the government. That action, of course, was forced upon the wheat board by the government. That is to say, the wheat board was forced to sell wheat to Great Britain below the current market price as a result of the government's having signed the British wheat agreement. They were forced to sell wheat to Canadian millers at less than current prices as a result of orders in council passed I believe under the War Measures Act.

We in this group take the very definite stand that the government should not use the