

*Farm Prices*

What I wish to say in that regard is this. They could be taken without wheat, but at the same time, may I say that this board that is set up will be taking into consideration what is happening in regard to wheat. That is, while they do not control, still, all the facts in relation to wheat will have to be kept in their proper relation to the provinces in which wheat is grown, and in relation to the farm income of Canada. All that will have to be kept on the records of the board.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): To give effect to a levelling of farm income, to balance things.

Mr. GARDINER: I will give something relating to that in a moment.

Mr. WRIGHT: Why does the government not place wheat under the control of this board?

Mr. GARDINER: That is an old story that dates back to 1897 and I would not care to review it all. We passed a grain act known as the Canada Grain Act, which had its origin in the discussions that took place around the beginning of the century. The bill was introduced in 1901 and was passed in that year, known as the Canada Grain Act, and it was placed under the administration of the Department of Trade and Commerce. It has been under that administration ever since, and under that administration there was, before this war started at all, a board which was doing or attempting to do in effect some of the things which this board may do now. That is to say, they had a floor price, a pegged price or advance payment set, and if wheat went to the wheat board the farmer would receive that minimum price no matter what the price was on the market, and he also had the advantages of participation.

Mr. WRIGHT: Why are not other grains under this board?

Mr. GARDINER: Some years ago it was provided in the act as originally drawn, the wheat board act, that they might handle oats and barley, but that was removed from the act a few years later.

Mr. WRIGHT: Is the minister proposing to have other grains under these boards that he is now setting up?

Mr. GARDINER: In practice what we would do would be this. If the government did find it necessary to put floors under oats and barley after the war, the administration in

[Mr. Gardiner.]

that connection, the commodity board appointed, would be the wheat board. That would be the natural thing to do.

Mr. WRIGHT: And these boards that the minister is now proposing—

Mr. GARDINER: I wish the hon. member would allow me to finish the statement I am making. He can ask questions afterwards in committee. I would like to get on the record the system as it is intended to operate, and afterwards hon. members can ask any questions they like. I have reviewed shortly the facts which are on this sheet with regard to the gross cash income from farm products but I would call attention to the lower part of the table, which should be published along with the other, which gives the index number, receipts from the sale of farm products, 1926-29 being 100, and it gives the percentage figures. These again are given by provinces and it will be found that for example in the province of Saskatchewan, which produces a greater percentage of grain in relation to all its farm products than any other province, the figure for 1926 is 103, and the figure for 1932, the low year, is 27.5. The figure for 1939, the last year before the war, is 56 and the figure for 1943, which is the last year for which I have figures, is 110.3. In other words, it is back to a little higher level than in 1926. But when you read the table either way from that, you find that is the low point for all the provinces in Canada.

Mr. BLACKMORE: Which is it?

Mr. GARDINER: Saskatchewan. That is the low figure. If you go west from Saskatchewan, you find that Alberta is 124.4, which is the second lowest; British Columbia 190.3; and as you go east from Saskatchewan you find that Manitoba is 167; Ontario is 149.5 and Quebec 199.3. You note that the poor crop of last year did seriously affect the province of Ontario. New Brunswick, you find, is 247, Nova Scotia 205 and Prince Edward Island 190.9. That will give some idea of what the relationships are. But while the increase in the first six months of this year of cash income was 25 per cent for all Canada—I understand that the figures are not yet available finally—for western Canada, speaking from memory the figures for Saskatchewan show over 60 per cent of an increase this year as compared with the first six months of last year. That has some relationship to the statement made by the member for Yorkton, namely, that much of our grain, even grain not grown in 1943, was delivered in the early part of this year as a result of the increas-