

The Address—Mr. Diefenbaker

that this year there will be increased shipments of wheat from our country by way of exports over the year before. There have been increased shipments of wheat, cattle, uranium, aircraft and farm machinery. My friend says that our imports have fallen and that is true but, as a result, the deficit on commodity trade with all countries was reduced for that period from \$241 million to \$102 million. What is the effect of reducing that deficit? The effect is that the Canadian dollar is thereby placed in a position where Canadians can meet the competition of other countries to a greater degree than was possible last year.

My hon. friend dealt at some length with the question of trade and the figures he quoted are correct but we say, having regard to conditions generally in the United States and now also in Europe, that that record is one which indicates an application on the part of this government to the problem of trade which was not characteristic of the former government during the last two or three years.

The wheat situation has received prompt and continuous attention. One of the first assignments of the Minister of Trade and Commerce was to accompany members of the wheat board on a mission to the United Kingdom and western Europe. The purpose of this mission was to investigate market possibilities for the crop year 1957-58 and to discuss wheat marketing problems with importers. These are the figures; as at March 31, Canadian exports of wheat were ahead of the previous crop year by 18 million bushels and that lead will be increased by the end of the present crop year. I ask my hon. friends: Is that not a statistic which indicates action for, remember, the piling surplus of wheat made impossible anything in the nature of stability in western agriculture.

It is asked: What is the situation in other exporting countries during that period of time? In the United States in the same year, that is to say the crop year up to March 31, exports were down by 100 million bushels. Argentine exports were down by 15 million bushels, Australian exports were down by some 50 million bushels, the latter figure of course being affected by a poorer wheat crop in that year.

My hon. friends talk about international affairs and it is of course remembered that in attaining these results the Canadian wheat board had to make a good showing in all commercial markets for wheat. We also realized that some commonwealth countries were urgently in need of food which they did not have the resources to purchase in the needed

quantities. At the request of Colombo plan countries, certain residual Colombo plan funds were applied to the purchases of wheat for immediate shipment. We then made available up to \$35 million to Colombo plan countries for the purchase of wheat on the basis of long-term credit bearing a nominal interest rate. I ask my hon. friend when he says we are doing nothing, why did his party not act in the period when wheat was piling up in this country? His party was speaking of the greatness of the Colombo plan, but why was there no major assistance to these countries in the manner I have indicated is characteristic of this government?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): The fact is that there was.

Mr. Diefenbaker: My hon. friend had better look it up and he will find that there is no basis for the statement that there was made available to Colombo countries moneys with which to purchase wheat.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): We gave wheat to India.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I ask my hon. friend to check the facts.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I do not need to check the facts. They are there and they still stand.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): You did not give them in these proportions.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I beg your pardon?

Mr. Chevrier: He said we did not give them in these proportions.

Mr. Diefenbaker: These proportions are fair and nothing like this has ever taken place before. About 15 million bushels of wheat have now been shipped or will be shipped to India and we made available \$15 million to provide wheat and flour to Colombo plan countries as a gift. As a result India, Pakistan and Ceylon have received further deliveries of wheat or flour. These actions have served a useful purpose in our wheat program and at the same time have enabled Canada to show a practical interest in the problems of our hard pressed neighbours within the commonwealth.

In addition to that, in order to meet the farmers' situation we undertook, despite ridicule on the part of the opposition, to make available cash advances for farm-stored wheat. My hon. friends said that such advances would not be used and that there was really nothing to that. I see, however, that nearly 50,000 producers in western Canada took advantage of this arrangement during the time when delivery quotas were relatively low owing to elevator congestion. At this session