

Agricultural Products Act

are in 1949 and we are being asked to continue for one more year powers which go farther than any socialist would want to go in peacetime, as the minister himself said, powers which are arbitrary and absolute, powers which are unnecessary.

In view of the minister's own description of the bill when he introduced it in 1947, in view of the fact that during this discussion it has been brought out that the bill is unconstitutional, it is difficult to understand why a responsible minister and a reputedly responsible government would ask this house to vote for the continuation of such a measure. The measure is unconstitutional; the measure is unnecessary; the measure is undesirable.

Under this legislation as it has been administered in the past, agricultural production has been declining. Estimates given before the food and agricultural organization of the United Nations recently indicate that a serious situation with respect to the availability of foodstuffs will face the world within the next five or ten years. According to the experts it is doubtful whether we can avoid a famine. We should, then, be taking every possible step to increase production. The fact is that in Canada our farmers are faced with great uncertainty through the loss of markets in the United Kingdom—one example is the apple market—and this has resulted in a decline of agricultural production in many important commodities. I have figures here which were supplied by the bureau of statistics covering the production of beef, pork and cheese.

The figures for beef show that in 1946 the production was 1,053,390,000 pounds and in 1947, 962,801,000 pounds. The figures for 1948 are not available. There was a drop in production between 1946 and 1947 of practically 43 million pounds. With respect to pork, the 1946 production was 993,471,000 pounds and 1947, 972,089,000 pounds. The 1948 figures are not available. There was a drop of roughly 21 million pounds between 1946 and 1947. It might be noted that these figures are unofficial and the bureau will not accept responsibility for them, but there is no reason to suppose that they are inaccurate. The 1946 production of cheese was 148,884,000 pounds; in 1947, 124 million pounds; and in 1948, 89 million pounds. There was a drop in the first year of roughly 25 million pounds; in the second year of roughly 35 million pounds; or a total drop of 60 million pounds in the two years.

Those are three of the important foodstuffs produced in Canada today, foodstuffs

[Mr. Fulton.]

which would make a great contribution to feeding not only the United Kingdom and Europe but other countries in the world. As a result of the administration of the minister's department, as a result very largely of the dislike of the farmers of Canada of arbitrary controls over their production and their marketing which have been exercised under this act, the production of foodstuffs in Canada has been falling.

If one gives thought to the matter one can easily appreciate that the farmers could hardly be expected to go out and increase their production, increase their acreage, increase their cattle and swine herds when they have these powers hanging over their heads, when they have no certainty that they will be able through their own organizations to fix prices and determine their own marketing policies. As a result of that uncertainty and the dislike on their part, there has been a substantial decline in the production of agricultural commodities.

In conclusion I should like to repeat the points I have made. The fact that this measure is unconstitutional is of vital concern to the farmers. They do not want to have powers taken away from their own boards by unconstitutional legislation. It is unconstitutional in that under constitutional legislation it would be possible to give powers to the producers to regulate their own marketing and production. There would thus be given to the producers the ability to provide for themselves an assured stability.

It is undesirable because of the features which I have described. Above all, it is undesirable because through the administrative failures of the department in the past few years our agricultural production has been declining. For these three reasons I shall vote against the bill.

THE ROYAL ASSENT

Mr. Speaker: I have the honour to inform the house that I have received the following communication:

Ottawa, March 25, 1949

Sir:

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Hon. Thibaudeau Rinfret, Chief Justice of Canada, acting as deputy of His Excellency the Governor General, will proceed to the Senate chamber on Friday, the 25th March, at 5.45 p.m., for the purpose of giving the royal assent to certain bills.

I have the honour to be,
sir,

Your obedient servant,

J. F. Delaute
Assistant Secretary to the Governor General