

Agricultural Prices Support Act

enjoyed during the years prior to the war. That was a natural expectation on the part of the farmers of Canada, but it has not worked out that way.

Today our markets for farm products in Great Britain are at a lower ebb than they have been for some time, and are likely to fall lower. Just recently a report appeared in the press stating that the United States congress was proposing to use \$1 billion of ERP funds for the purpose of selling United States agricultural products to Great Britain, western Europe and mid-eastern countries during the coming year. If in this way the United States during the coming year markets \$1 billion worth of its surplus food products the outlook for Canadian farm products in those markets does not look very hopeful. That is why I think the government made a mistake in 1947 in not having some permanent legislation whereby they could have entered the British market on a long-term basis. If they had done so I am convinced that we could have secured a far larger portion of that market than we have. If the government had been prepared in 1947 to enter into negotiations on an exchange basis with Great Britain, accepting certain goods from her in exchange for our agricultural products, I am convinced we could have had long term agreements with them for the sale of cheese, bacon, apples and other products. Having failed to do that we found that these markets were disappearing, that countries in Europe such as Poland, Holland and Denmark, as well as commonwealth countries, were able to secure the British market. Today we find ourselves in the position that we have surpluses accumulating in Canada. Not only that; when officials from Great Britain came here to negotiate contracts with us I do not think the government used the right approach in meeting those negotiators.

Last year, for instance, about the time that the British food purchasing mission was in Canada, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner) made an address to a board of trade dinner in Brantford, Ontario. In the *Ottawa Citizen* of December 6, 1949, I find the following:

... he recalled that prior to the second world war, Canada was Britain's chief source of wheat and apples, and also supplied considerable quantities of pork, cheese, beef and other foods. During the war Canada became Britain's chief supplier of pork, eggs and cheese, and also shipped large amounts of beef and milk.

"During the last two years", he said, "a very decided official effort has been made to drive every one of these products excepting wheat off the British market. And now that the four year wheat contract is drawing to a close an effort is being made to drive off a considerable part of our wheat as well."

Later on he stated:

"I am a free trader and advocate the freest possible exchange of farm products for the necessities required on the farm. But when one is convinced that the other party to the trade has made up his mind he is not going to buy anything from us that he can avoid buying, free exchange is impossible."

I would say that is not a very diplomatic statement to make while negotiators are in this country—

Mr. Gardiner: They were not; they had gone home.

Mr. Wright: —endeavouring to negotiate contracts for our food. If the minister was consistent in his statements it would not be so bad, but a short time before that, speaking in Alliston, Ontario, he told a different story. He stated then:

"In any conversations I have had with Sir Stafford Cripps and Right Hon. John Strachey, food minister, I have never gathered the impression they were not prepared to take all the products they could afford to pay for from Canada. I am satisfied that they will."

The article goes on to state:

In an earlier speech in Ottawa, the agriculture minister said in his opinion "the view that Canada is to be depended on for supplies of food only during the war is rather hard on Canadian agriculture." He added that he did not believe that this was the view of a great many people in Britain.

Certainly those two statements do not jibe.

At six o'clock the house took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The house resumed at eight o'clock.

Mr. Wright: When the house rose at six o'clock I was pointing out that I did not think the approach of this government to the British government in renewing our food contracts with Great Britain had been very diplomatic. I do not think, however, that was the main reason why we were unable to renew many of these contracts, and to obtain the prices we would have liked to obtain. There is no doubt in my mind that the main reason for this was the lack of dollars on the part of the British government with which to purchase our products. I feel equally sure that had we, in 1947, been prepared to make bilateral agreements with Britain with respect to our marketable surplus, under which we would have accepted British goods in exchange for our food, we would have been able to make agreements similar to those which Britain has made with many other countries.

That was not the policy of the government at that time, however, nor have they changed their policy since. The result has been that we have practically lost the British market,