

did not even have to carry it out of our barn. Prospective purchasers, I remember very well, would turn the fanning mill in order to make sure that they got their supply at \$25 a bushel. Next year the price of sweet clover seed, if my memory serves me correctly, and I am speaking entirely from memory, ran somewhere around \$2.50 a bushel, or just about one-tenth of what it was the year before. I mention that only as an illustration of the fluctuation of prices with which the farmer has to contend and of the uncertainty to which it gives rise. Therefore I welcome any measure which will check the rapid and violent fluctuations in prices, which are one of the biggest handicaps of agriculture to-day, because the farmer should know what he will get when he markets his stuff.

The government of Ontario last fall set up an agricultural commission of inquiry to report on floor prices for farm products. That report was adopted on May 16, 1944, and I am sure that the minister has seen and given consideration to this report, which deals in an exploratory way with the whole question of floor prices of farm products. I should like to quote a passage to show what this group of qualified practical farmers placed on record in connection with floor prices for farm products. The report says:

To establish any sort of a workable base for the actual building of floor price plans, much more specific definitions of their purpose must be devised. The social objectives stated above can with some limitations be all incorporated into one or another of the following definite economic ends:

And this is what I desire particularly to place on the record as the objectives which these practical farmers say are possible:

(a) To give the farmer cost of production, plus a profit.

(b) To assure the farmer a financial return comparable with that of producers or workmen on the same general income level.

(c) To maintain the farmer's income at a level where it will buy as much as it did in some past period when farming was considered profitable.

(d) To call out the required volume of production of each of the several farm products.

(e) To keep farm prices from declining to ruinous levels.

Therefore, sir, I want on the second reading to give my support to the general purposes and objectives of this measure. I think that there will be considerable criticism of certain provisions which the minister has incorporated in the bill, as there may be differences of opinion as to their value. If any general criticism is to be offered it is that we have neglected agriculture for so long that it got into the position where the gross income of

the farmers of Canada at one time in recent years amounted only to something like eleven per cent of the entire national income of Canada. That is a national disgrace. It is a national scandal which can never be allowed to recur.

I trust that in considering this measure on behalf of agriculture and other measures that may follow it we shall never forget that agriculture is still the major and perhaps the most important of all the enterprises in which the people of this country are engaged, and from many angles it is by far the most influential and the most valuable. When agriculture goes up, Canada goes up. When agriculture goes down, Canada goes down. The purchasing power of agriculture is great, and when the purchasing power of agriculture is maintained at a proper level, business generally throughout the country will be maintained at its very best levels.

Mr. G. H. CASTLEDEN (Yorkton): I wish to make just a few brief observations in order to point out certain things in this bill which, in our opinion, instead of leading to an improvement in farm conditions, a betterment of the position of the actual producer and the ultimate consumer, could produce worse conditions than those from which these people are already suffering. Generally speaking, the appointment of an agricultural purchasing and export board is in accordance with the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation programme which has been endorsed by that organization for a good many years.

Like so much important legislation which has been brought before the house in the closing days of the session, this bill, I am afraid, as the previous speaker (Mr. Graydon) has said, comes a little too late. It is too little, and the powers which it confers can be used one way or the other depending upon the personnel of the board and upon the personnel of the government which appoints that board. The need for planning in our agricultural life is evident not only in the farming areas but also in the industrial centres. In fact the records of Canada in the matter of nutrition show that this country has never faced the problems of agriculture or the distribution of the benefits to be derived from agriculture and which the people might enjoy.

It was interesting to most of us to note in the minister's remarks this morning the hint that this board might have the power to set prices in Canada and to control domestic prices. In view of the fact that the country's capacity for production in food very often, indeed in most cases, is from eight to ten times as much as the nation requires, this