

Agricultural Products Act

preventing the export of such items as hogs, pork and dairy products to the United States, should be removed. There is a market there made available by the provisions of the Geneva trade treaties which should be taken advantage of now instead of having it barred to our producers by artificial embargoes which have been placed on trade by the government of this country.

The problem facing Canada is a long-term problem. Even if the exchange situation is settled or a solution is found for that problem in the near future it will not help the Canadian farmers materially because many of the agreements which the United Kingdom has entered into run from two to six and seven years. As an example, agreement with Great Britain places Polish agriculture in a position where it can plan for the future as it will run for several years.

The market in Great Britain for our agricultural products is but a shadow of its former self. The importance of the British market is shown in an article which appeared in *Foreign Trade* of January 1948, a publication published by the Department of Trade and Commerce.

This article, which deals with trade with Great Britain, says:

Trade with Great Britain has dominated the development of Canada in recent years, the flow of exports from this country during the eleven years ending with the conclusion of hostilities having followed closely the fluctuations in commodity production. This similarity would indicate that the prosperity of Canada depended to a large extent on the sale of our products in the British market.

As the hon. member for Neepawa (Mr. Bracken) said today, while between 1939 and 1949 we negotiated with the United Kingdom over 125 contracts for foodstuffs, having as many as 22 in force in one year, today we have only 4. One contract covers wheat and another covers cheese, but this latter contract is for an amount less than our total shipments of cheese in any one year during the past thirty years. The bacon contract is lower than any bacon contract we have had in the past several years.

This is a grave and serious situation, so serious that on December 7 last the Minister of Agriculture, when speaking before the dominion-provincial agricultural conference, used these words:

The Canadian government can no longer assure farmers a market in Britain for all the hogs they can produce.

In connection with eggs, our contract this year has been reduced by 62 per cent over that of last year. The stark truth that we must face is that the United Kingdom, because of a shortage of dollars, finds herself in the position where she must drastic-

ally cut her purchases of salmon, abandon her purchases of poultry and apples and reduce her purchases of timber to only a fraction of the pre-war quantities. She has reduced her bacon purchases to one-quarter and her purchases of cheese have been reduced in the manner I have indicated. When the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner) returned from Great Britain in December last he used words that were most definite and challenging. He stated that the problem of interchangeability of exchange was one of the problems that had to be solved before the United Kingdom could increase her importations of Canadian farm products. There is no indication that it will be solved shortly. Therefore I contend that, to aid our agricultural production, the agricultural products which Canada can, under the Geneva agreement, export into the United States and that are now denied export in that country, should be allowed to be exported to the United States to the end that Canadian agricultural production will be able to maintain and increase itself instead of having to be reduced because of the loss of the United Kingdom market.

Mr. H. W. Herridge (Kootenay West): I do not intend to detain the house much longer, but I wish to make a few observations from the point of view of the interior British Columbia fruit growers concerning this act. When I consider an act such as this I do not visualize members of the legal profession sitting in plush chairs going through dusty tomes looking for niceties concerning the constitutional position of the act. I consider the opinion of the men who work the soil and till the land because I think, Mr. Speaker, that if you look through history you will find that if you base your judgment upon the opinion of those who till the soil of any country you will not be wrong as often as lawyers are.

Mr. Gibson (Comox-Alberni): The man on the soil; that is right.

Mr. Herridge: I am going to present the point of view of the fruit growers and poultrymen of the interior of British Columbia, and of the farmers whom I have the honour to represent. Before proceeding I wish to read briefly from a statement the minister made in the house on May 28, 1946, in reply to a speech I made on agricultural marketing on that date. At that time the minister had this to say, at page 1964 of *Hansard*:

We have these boards, operated by the government it is true, but operated on behalf of all the people of Canada, to handle the exportation of our surplus farm products whether they come from a private