

Wheat—Marketing of Surplus

international commodity clearing house, a proposal whereby surplus food would be taken off the regular market and would, by an orderly method, be marketed in those countries that lacked purchasing power, and where that food was needed. And at the conference in 1949, to the everlasting shame of this government and to the everlasting shame of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner), as the representative of the Canadian government, he opposed the setting up of an international commodity clearing house, opposed the establishing of a world food pool.

Mr. Gardiner: You are just dreaming.

Mr. Argue: No, I am not dreaming, at all. But the minister may have been dreaming when he made his speech to that conference.

Mr. Knight: Let us hear his speech.

Mr. Argue: On November 24, 1949 the Minister of Agriculture said:

Any transactions developed under the short term trading functions will be subject to concurrence by the governments concerned, and the major details of such transactions will also be subject to agreement by governments. This being the case it hardly seems necessary to have an international agency actually buying and selling in commodity markets. It may even be questioned whether such activity in commodity markets by an international agency is desirable. It seems to us, therefore, that the question of the creation of a large capital fund for such a purpose is not necessarily an issue.

It is clear from that statement that the Minister of Agriculture was opposing such a question. Then he went on to say:

As has been pointed out in other conferences, however, national governments can, and do, perform this function and we do not see that stocks held by an international agency will, in the short run, contribute to any improvement in the present situation. Canada, for example, has provided for the holding of stocks of wheat under government control.

That is just as plain as it could be.

Mr. Gardiner: On short term.

Mr. Argue: That is just as plain as it could be.

Mr. Gardiner: My hon. friend will admit that that is for a short term; you are talking about a long term policy.

Mr. Argue: I am talking about the very clear fact that the Minister of Agriculture was opposed to the plan set forth by Sir John Boyd Orr in 1949.

Mr. Gardiner: I never did oppose Sir John Boyd Orr, at any time. I supported Sir John Boyd Orr every time he appeared before the conference.

[Mr. Argue.]

Mr. Argue: And there is just as much accuracy in that statement as in a great many other statements made by the Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Gardiner: If I could not be more accurate than my hon. friend I would not speak at all.

Mr. Argue: Canada, with the help of the United States, opposed the international commodity clearing house. The record is clear, and the statement of the Minister of Agriculture is clear.

Mr. Gardiner: Canada did no such thing.

Mr. Argue: It was opposed in—

Mr. Gardiner: Canada did not do any such thing, and neither did I.

Mr. Argue: The Minister of Agriculture can “beller” all he likes, and he can make his forty minutes speech when the time comes, but he cannot change the record of his statement at that conference.

Mr. Gardiner: And he does not want to, either.

Mr. Knowles: He has tried often enough.

Mr. Argue: The government went on, in spite of the warning from this group—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Argue: —and changed the marketing of agricultural products from Great Britain to the United States. We said that the United States was not a reliable market for Canadian agricultural products. We said that Canadian agricultural products in the main competed with similar agricultural products produced in the United States, that before long the Americans would have surpluses of their own and that they would be keeping out Canadian surpluses from here. And we have seen that very thing happen.

The Americans have kept out our wheat and our barley and our cheese and our powdered milk and our oats and our dairy products. The United States has kept out almost all of Canada's surplus agricultural products that we have attempted to market. And the government has lost the British market for Canadian bacon and cheese and eggs, and other important commodities.

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): May I ask what action the United States has taken to keep out Canadian barley? I am not aware that Canadian barley was kept out.

Mr. Argue: That was a mistake, Mr. Speaker.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.