

effects in keeping Cuban sugar out of Canada than a direct increase in duty would have been. That change consisted, not in directly increasing the rate of duty, but in giving the Minister of National Revenue the power to place an arbitrary value for duty purposes on all sugar entering Canada from countries outside of the agreement entered into between Canada and the British West Indies. The effect of that was to place an absolute prohibition on the importation of sugar from Cuba into Canada. Cuba in turn in that very year, as a reprisal no doubt against the action of Canada in fixing an arbitrary valuation for duty purposes on sugar, increased its duty on potatoes, and I think I am right in saying increased it especially against Canadian potatoes because Cuba in increasing the duty on potatoes gave a preference of twenty cents per hundred pounds to the American potato grower.

I know it will be pointed out that under the Cuba-United States treaty of years before Cuba was always supposed to give a preference to American potatoes as against imports from any other country, but I want the committee to understand that notwithstanding the fact that Cuba prior to 1932 had given a preference to American potato growers, we in the maritime provinces had captured the Cuban potato market. But in 1932 Cuba, in retaliation against Canada's action, placed its duty on Canadian potatoes so high that our potatoes were almost entirely excluded from the Cuban market. I should like to place on Hansard some figures in connection with the export of Canadian potatoes to Cuba. In 1922 we exported to Cuba 1,507,620 bushels of potatoes. Our exports kept on increasing, notwithstanding the preference given to the American potato producer, until in 1930 we had reached the figure of 2,003,437 bushels. What do we find after the passing by the present government of an order in council fixing in respect of Cuban sugar, an arbitrary value for duty purposes? We find that year after year our exports of potatoes dwindled until in 1934 we exported only 359,290 bushels. Is any further proof needed to establish the contention made to-day in the maritimes that the order in council passed in 1932 has resulted in the loss of our Cuban market for potatoes? It may be said that this order in council was passed to protect our sugar refineries against the importations of refined Cuban sugar, but we must not lose sight of the fact that in attempting to give this protection we have ruined the market of an industry which gives greater employment than do all the sugar refineries combined.

[Mr. Veniot.]

The Minister of Trade and Commerce is a disciple of accuracy, and I was surprised when he made the statement that Canada did not import any refined sugar from Cuba. The Prime Minister (Mr. Bennett) has stated that this order in council was directed against the importation of refined Cuban sugar; why was it passed if we were not importing sugar? What are the facts? In 1930, Canada imported from Cuba 359,698 hundredweight of refined granulated sugar. In 1931 we imported 310,252 hundredweight. In 1932 the importations had dwindled to 125,995 hundredweight; in 1933 they had dropped down to 400 hundredweight and in 1934 the importations were nil. Since the Minister of Trade and Commerce is quite ready to take hon. members on this side to task for inaccuracy, he cannot object to an hon. member on this side pointing out to him that he should study the statistics of his own department in order to find out wherein he himself is inaccurate.

I should like to take advantage of this occasion to refer to the eastern marketing board for potatoes. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Weir) has told us on several occasions that this board was accepted ninety-six per cent by the farmers in eastern Canada and the maritimes who had attended the forty-eight meetings.

Mr. WEIR (Melfort): I should like to correct the hon. member; the ninety-six per cent acceptance to which I referred was the tree fruit board in British Columbia.

Mr. VENIOT: The minister told us that the farmers in the eastern section of Canada had accepted this board almost unanimously. While that statement is correct in many respects I should like to point out that this unanimity would not have been evidenced had not two statements been made. First, the farmers were told that the eastern board would consist of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, and if any one of the five provinces dropped out the board would not be put into operation. They were also told—I referred to this on a former occasion—that under the new board the grading system in force in the maritimes for some years would not be changed. Neither of these promises was kept. Why has there been so much dissatisfaction on the part of the farmers who were practically unanimous in accepting this board when it was first proposed? First, the farmers claim that they were deceived in that Quebec did not come into the agreement, and Quebec was thus at liberty to sell its potatoes on the Quebec markets in any shape or form desired, without any grading and without any attention being