

Farm Prices

that the clauses cannot be discussed *seriatim*. I am inclined, however, to think that the hon. member is making a general argument with respect to the bill, although he is going into a little more detail than I would want him to do.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: I was referring to individual sections, Mr. Speaker, for the sake of clarity so that the minister can follow my argument.

Mr. GARDINER: You have covered all that there are.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: There are so few sections dealing with so important a matter that we have to ask these questions for the purpose of ascertaining the philosophy underlying this bill and what is to be the method of operation. There is a title to the bill, a preamble, a delegation of authority—

Mr. GARDINER: There is no preamble.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: As a matter of fact the minister is correct. The government have actually extended themselves and have done away with the preamble, and preambles are usually used by the courts to ascertain the purpose of the legislation and the method of operation. Just in that connection let me say that there is one section, 10 (3), which refers to the possibility of a profit being made. I would like to find out from the minister just how it is expected that this board, if the farmer is to receive fair and proper prices, can possibly expect a profit in its operations. That requires elucidation and, if there is any profit, under this section it is apparent that it goes not to the farmer but into the consolidated revenue fund. One section provides for the possibility of the farmer receiving the highest possible price less the costs of administration, and another section provides for the possibility of there being a profit.

There is one other matter to which I wish to refer, and that is in connection with grain farmers. The grain farmers in western Canada to-day are not as well off proportionately, even taking into consideration present day prices, as other groups of farmers across this dominion. As a matter of fact, the grain farmer has benefited least of all in the period of the war by the prices that are being paid to-day. The prices which the wheat farmer and the other grain farmers are receiving to-day are far below the level of 1926-29.

Mr. GARDINER: The prices for grain to-day are not below the 1926-29 levels.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: I always believe in having a witness to call in support of the

[Mr. Speaker.]

statements which I make. I am now going to call as my witness the Minister of Agriculture himself. In the *Regina Leader-Post*—

Mr. GARDINER: That was some months ago.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: Oh, but there has been no change in grain prices since last November.

Mr. GARDINER: Oh, yes.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: The minister will be able to explain afterwards. The farmer is still receiving the initial price of \$1.25. There have been slight fluctuations in the prices of certain other grain products, but this is what the minister said when he was speaking in Regina last November—not on a political platform, but addressing a delegation from the Saskatchewan wheat pool, and there of course he was speaking to grain farmers. He is reported in the *Regina Leader Post* as follows:

Mr. Gardiner quoted figures compiled by the bureau of statistics to show that the grain farmer had benefited least of all classes of farmers in price advances which had taken place during the war years, and was still well below the average of the 1926-29 period.

Mr. GARDINER: The 1943 prices were not available at that time. I had in mind at that time the 1942 prices. I handed the sheet to my hon. friend a little while ago with the 1943 prices. Put those figures on the record.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: The statement of the minister as reported by the *Regina Leader Post* is scarcely in accord with the statement that he made here to-day. There may be an explanation, but the statement he made to-day had to do with products other than grain products. I am dealing now with grain products. I quote further from the *Regina Leader Post*. The minister said:

Taking the 1926-29 price levels as the base and designating this period by the index figure 100, Saskatchewan was the only province that was below that mark—20 points below to be exact after including acreage payments.

Mr. GARDINER: That was for 1942.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: The minister can give the 1943 figures when he comes to reply. Let me finish what he said on that occasion, on November 10, 1943:

By provinces he quoted the index figures in relation to the 100 representing the 1926-29 average as follows: Prince Edward Island, 124; Nova Scotia, 166; New Brunswick, 170; Quebec, 165; Ontario, 132; Manitoba, 124; Saskatchewan, 80.

In other words, when the minister was speaking, and it was a matter of only a few months ago, the grain farmers of the province