

Agricultural Products Act

Bill No. 82 will enable producers to control their own marketing. The minister could use the provincial producers' boards to obtain the produce to fill his contract with the United Kingdom. He does not need an extension of the present Agricultural Products Act, which is a control act, not a marketing act. As soon as this house enacts marketing legislation such as is contemplated in Bill No. 82, the need for this act will have disappeared, if it ever existed. The proper course for the government to have followed would have been to introduce and proceed with Bill No. 82 and drop this bill altogether. That is one more reason why we should vote against this bill and refuse to give the minister the power for which he asks. The bill which we are now considering, and which would continue the Agricultural Products Act for another year, merely gives the minister power to confiscate, power to set prices, power to negotiate on behalf of the federal government and the governments of other countries. In short, it gives him and him alone absolute control over every aspect of the agricultural economy of Canada. It gives him arbitrary powers which are entirely unnecessary.

The minister has based his support of this bill on a number of arguments. As was pointed out earlier, originally he based it on the fact that it assured stability to the agricultural economy. Lately, however, he has been basing it on the fact that it is necessary to him to fulfil his contracts with the United Kingdom. As was said at the beginning in 1947, and as remains the fact today, the bill is not necessary to fulfil our contracts with the United Kingdom. The minister can enter the market in Canada and buy the produce which he desires to fill his contracts. That again is another reason why this act should not be continued in force. In fact what the minister has been doing in respect to some of the commodities is to take possession of them under the arbitrary powers which he has at less than the fair market price, or else to use the bill and his arbitrary powers as a threat over the heads of farmers to induce them to part with their produce at less than fair market prices in order that he could supply the goods to the United Kingdom. No one objects to supplying the goods to the United Kingdom in their difficulty, but we repeat here, as we did in the case of the wheat contract, that if that is to be national policy, then the nation as a whole should bear the cost, and that cost should not be borne by the farmers alone.

If the minister were willing to take the trouble, and if he wished that the farmers should get a fair price for their produce, he would not use his powers under this bill; he

would enter the market and buy the produce to fulfil his contracts, and the farmers would get a fair price for the produce which was taken. Instead of that, what happens? The minister introduces, and now asks to have continued, a bill giving him arbitrary and irresponsible control over every feature of the agricultural economy of this country. He introduces a socialist bill into this house. The farmers of this country do not wish to be subjected to socialist control. They want to have control over their own affairs through their own producers' boards.

When the bill was first introduced the minister was careful to say that he would be very cautious in the exercise of those powers. He does not deny now that he has those arbitrary powers. In fact he has here a socialist measure.

Mr. Gardiner: He never did deny it.

Mr. Fulton: He cannot deny it because he himself said it was a socialist bill when he introduced it in 1947. In speaking in the house on March 14, 1947, the minister used the following words in describing the powers which he has in the bill as reported at page 1389 of *Hansard*:

In other words, the orders in council covered by this legislation—

That is, the Agricultural Products Act by which the orders were continued in force.

—have in them powers which I doubt very much even members of the socialist party would desire to have in legislation which is to be passed for the purpose of dealing with a situation which will arise in peacetime.

That was in 1947, only two years after the end of the war when there was still some doubt as to whether we were in peacetime. But there can be no doubt four years after the end of the war that we are no longer in a state of war emergency, particularly with regard to agriculture. Just to make it perfectly clear that what the minister was asking for was a continuation of wartime control powers, powers of a socialistic or absolute nature, he went on to say, as reported on page 1389 of *Hansard*:

We are suggesting in this legislation that for one year we be given authority to continue to do what we were doing in wartime. We are not saying that everything we did during wartime will be done; but we are saying, or suggesting, that the authority we had during wartime should be allowed to us for one more year.

There you have it, the authority that they had in wartime was to be continued. But I point out that it was asked for for one more year. That was in 1947. It was continued for one more year, which brought it up to 1948. What happened then? We were asked to continue it for one more year. Now we