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CANADA AND THE WORLD FOOD SITUATION

An Address by Mr. J.G. Gardiner, Minister of
Agriculture, before the Fifth Session, FAO
Conference, in Washington, D.C., on
November 24, 1949.

...A Canadian reading the "Review of the World Food Situation" will be likely to make two criticisms. The first would be that it deals with two periods which were quite abnormal; the ten years of war and the ten years before the war. It tends to leave the impression that our objective should be to return to conditions existing prior to the war when many nations were motivated by policies which pointed the way to self-sufficiency.

Canadians would be inclined to favour a return to the conditions in trade which existed before Hitler and during the period when an effort was being made in Europe in the early twenties to establish democracies interested in one another's prosperity.

The second would be that the report blocks Canada with the United States in speaking of North America and loses sight of the marked difference between the two countries which does exist under economic practice following the war. We in Canada are proud to be associated with our great and prosperous neighbour and I above all persons should be the last to criticize because I owe the cost of my elementary education to the citizens of the United States. Nevertheless, I think it is well that we should understand the economic relationships of our two countries.

During the early part of the war, as the Canadian member of the three-nation Combined Food Board, I was asked to have an embargo placed upon the shipment of wheat to the United States. The Government in Canada indicated that we would prefer to have that embargo placed on by the United States Government. It was placed on and is still on. We may wish at present that we had put it on and therefore could have taken it off, but the fact is that we ourselves are to blame for the action being taken as it was. There are other instances in association with other food products when Canada was responsible for establishing a distinct line of separation between Canada and the United States which has resulted in our relationships to world demand for food being quite different. This separation has resulted and can result in difficult surpluses beginning to appear. We are of opinion in Canada that it would be helpful in dealing with difficult surpluses if these obstructions to trade could be removed.

I think it necessary to make these observations before proceeding to make observations with regard to the Review itself. Having made them I will proceed to comment upon the Review.

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