

Agricultural Products Act

that for the last fifteen years, and now at last the government is bringing in a marketing act which appears to carry out that principle. When we see the bill, I trust that we shall be able to support it.

As I have said, we should try to increase our purchases from countries purchasing from us. In that respect we must do more than we have done to hold the British markets. And we must lessen our purchase from countries that do not buy freely from us. One could take a long time and go into these matters in more detail. We must try to keep the price level reasonably high; otherwise the burden of government costs and the burden of debt become unbearable.

One other thing we must do. If there is any degree of economic recession, we must try to see that it is equitably borne. It should not be left, as it has been all too often throughout the centuries, to unorganized groups of working people and farm people to carry the burden of breakdowns in the economy. We know better how to deal with such problems today. In the old days the farmers shared the major burden first; then those who lost their jobs; then those whose pay was decreased. We do not have to do things in that way from now on. In the last decade or two the world has not failed to learn. No matter how serious the situation becomes, I am sure that any government in office in this country will see to it that we no longer have the old extremes of prosperity and depression. It may be that we cannot control these things perfectly, but we can prevent the wide extremes.

By way of conclusion, Mr. Speaker, let me say that my criticism is this. The government in the matter of markets is facing great responsibilities, and in my judgment it has not measured up to them. In my judgment it has not been as frank as it should have been with the Canadian people in letting them know the seriousness of this situation. In my judgment the government has no adequate policy to meet the need.

As to the details of the food contract, I imagine few people will object to them. The criticism is that the sales are not large enough. With regard to the method of marketing, namely, state marketing, many will be critical. I personally am critical. We favour letting farmers organize to market their own products, and doing whatever is necessary on the part of the government to give them power to meet their own problems and to deal particularly with their surpluses. It is these surpluses which gives us the major part of our difficulties.

With respect to the constitutional aspect of this measure, that was thoroughly dealt

with by my leader last night. It now must be clear, if it was not before, that the government is exceeding its jurisdiction in continuing this kind of legislation in peacetime.

As to the over-all policy with regard to retaining the British market, as I have said, the government has no adequate policy, and for that reason we think that it deserves censure. The three contracts which the minister has made will be carried out. The government supporters will support the bill. This party accepts the situation with respect to these particular contracts for this year.

For the reasons I have given, we believe that the producers should have been put in a position to make their own marketing deals long before this. We believe that the failure to retain our export markets in Britain and in the sterling countries, and the failure to appreciate the serious effects of not retaining them, deserve the censure of this house, and we expressed that censure last night by voting against the resolution upon which this measure is based.

At one o'clock the house took recess.

The house resumed at three o'clock.

Mr. Victor Quelch (Acadia): Mr. Speaker, when the hon. member for Battle River (Mr. Fair) spoke during the resolution stage he stated that we would support this measure in order to facilitate the carrying out of our food contracts with Britain. This bill may be said to be supplementary to the Agricultural Prices Support Act, but an interesting point is that both this measure and that act are temporary measures. This bill is for one year, and the Agricultural Prices Support Act expires next year unless it is continued in operation by the governor in council. Therefore the whole agricultural situation is both uncertain and unsatisfactory. When I say that, I am not criticizing the price level, either today or in the immediate past, but I am criticizing the fact that there is no long-term legislation on the statute book to take care of agricultural prices in the future. Our farmers have absolutely no guarantee for more than one year in the future.

When I said that I was not criticizing present prices or prices in the immediate past I do not want that to be interpreted as meaning that I think that agriculture is in a prosperous condition today. Unfortunately that is not so. Professor MacFarlane, of Macdonald College, in an article in the *Country Guide* of October, 1948, states:

No published data reveal how small a proportion of Canadian farms have total capital values of \$15,000 or more. There is, however, good evidence that the figure does not exceed twelve per cent.