

Agricultural Products Act

two contracts, namely, the cheese contract and the egg contract. The previous cheese contracts have been for what is known as the dairy year, beginning April 1 in one year and continuing until March 31 in the next year. This year it is from April 1, 1949, to December 31, 1949. The reason for that difference has to do with the financing. That is, the financing for which the British government is arranging at present is for the calendar year rather than for any other period. The contract therefore is confined to the period ending December 31.

The reason for the change in the date of the egg contract is similar. It also ends on December 31, 1949. The reason for that has to do with the financing.

There is another change made in the bacon contract. It has been true that in previous contracts for bacon we have not given to the British government any undertaking with regard to the controls that we maintain on the boundary line. In other words, we have provided the British with bacon under the contracts by controlling the boundary line to the extent that we saw fit. Under those contracts it is true that we had controls on the boundary line from 1939 down to the present. Those controls were to the effect that all of our surplus bacon went to Great Britain. None of it was allowed to go out of the country in any other direction. This year the British were desirous of having in the contract some stipulation having to do with the amount which would be delivered. We agreed to a statement being put in the contract to the effect that until we reach the 160 million-pound mark, we will not take the restrictions off unless we have experiences similar to those we had last year. The experience last year was that from February to March we had more bacon than we could deliver under the British contract. Because the British did not have the finances with which to handle any more than was stipulated from week to week in the contract, they were unwilling to take delivery. That had something to do with the fact that later on we did not have as much as we might otherwise have had. And so this year we insisted that the contract should so read that, if the British took any such action in connection with bacon that might be on hand at any time, we would have a perfect right under the contract to open the American boundary line, or the boundary line into any other country, and to permit of the surplus going there. I may add that up to the present time there has not been any reason to take advantage of that provision. There is that change, so far as the bacon contract is concerned.

[Mr. Gardiner.]

Then, the cheese contract is practically the same in that regard as the bacon contract. At all times since we had the first contract with Britain we have sent all the cheese we had produced in the summer months. As a matter of fact, I believe that in four or five of those years we have requisitioned all the cheese produced in a certain period of the year and sent it to Great Britain. On previous occasions we undertook to requisition cheese, if necessary.

This year we have not undertaken to do so. As a matter of fact, I have said in the house that it is not our intention to requisition cheese this year. Those are the chief changes in the contracts. Otherwise they are approximately the same as last year.

The only other observations I would make while I am on my feet would be in reply to the statements made by the hon. member for Lake Centre.

Mr. Bracken: Before the minister comes to that, perhaps he would answer one or two other questions. Does he contemplate any other food contracts this year? May we have copies of the contracts now in force?

Mr. Gardiner: I do not think there would be any difficulty about supplying copies of the contracts now in force. The three contracts to which I have referred were signed and completed, and I believe I can secure copies of them just as they are. I have uncompleted copies on my desk at the moment. However, I believe I can secure some which could be tabled tonight or tomorrow.

Mr. Bracken: Does the minister contemplate any new agreements?

Mr. Gardiner: We placed a special section in the act two years ago whereby we made provision for an agreement in connection with apples. We have a standing offer to the British in which we have indicated that we do desire to enter into a contract to sell apples. I would not like to say that if an opportunity presented itself to make a contract for apples this year we would not make such a contract. Then, again, we have withdrawn some of the contracts at the suggestion of the British, because they did not have the finances with which to pay for those particular products. I am thinking of beans, for example. At the present time we are not selling any beans under contract to Britain. However, I imagine if we had an opportunity of doing so, under contract or otherwise, we would desire to sell beans to Britain. I would doubt very much if it would be necessary or possible to have a