

*Agricultural Products Board*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Lake Centre has the floor.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** I do not suppose fish comes under this measure, but my hon. friend has used it as an example, and in view of his recital of the serious conditions in the maritimes I believe the minister might very well join with the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Mayhew) and add fish to this measure in order to ensure at least a reasonable degree of prosperity for maritime fishermen. I have not listened for a long time to a member from the maritimes boasting that, although the people he represents are having difficult times and are not securing the profit for their products which they should, nonetheless they raise no complaints. The farmers—and I speak for an agricultural constituency—on the other hand ask and, I believe rightly so, demand that they shall receive fair and proper consideration. You will never build up a prosperous country if the fishermen of the maritimes are not prosperous, and you will never build up a prosperous country unless agriculture is prosperous.

**Mr. Gibson:** Ask and ye shall receive.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** My hon. friend certainly is a true exponent of the doctrine he now enunciates.

**Mr. Gibson:** I have not been asking for anything. I do not ask for anything.

**Mr. Graydon:** Keep your fingers out of the buzz saw.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** It is certainly nice that everyone is in such good form today and so friendly. It shows that we are all working together right from Vancouver island down to the maritimes. To return to the bill, the powers provided thereunder are very great. Arbitrary powers can be exercised by the board to be set up. I often hear some of my hon. friends discussing socialism in the abstract. I know of no more socialistic measure than the one now before the house. It sets up an agricultural products board with absolute power over livestock and livestock products, poultry and poultry products, milk, vegetables, fruit, honey, maple syrup, tobacco, fibre and fodder crops. It sets up a board whose authority will be absolute under regulations passed by the governor in council on the recommendation of the minister.

Far be it from me to depart at any time from your ruling, Mr. Speaker, for I follow the rulings of the Speaker with haste at all times, but the house is asked to place absolute power in the hands of the board to purchase, buy, sell or import agricultural products without any consideration of the welfare of the

farmer who is the producer. Apparently that is the purpose. Otherwise consideration would have been given to the amendment suggested by the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Argue). A very serious situation will result from the passing of this bill. Parliament meets and grants powers under this measure whereby, under regulations made by the board with the authority of the governor in council, and under the direction of the minister, it may sell or deliver agricultural products to the government of any country, purchase or negotiate contracts for the purchase of agricultural products, buy, sell or import agricultural products, store, transport or process or enter into contracts for storage, transportation or processing. If the powers contained in the bill were used by the board there would be nothing operated by private business in this country today, so far as agricultural products are concerned, that could not be done by the board.

I know of no case where greater powers have ever been granted to a board than under this measure. Powers have been granted before covering certain products. This bill covers every agricultural product imaginable and the products of agricultural products. I suggest that such power should not be granted until the house knows that the welfare of the producer is going to be considered and that parity prices are going to be assured to the farmers. Otherwise what we are doing is setting up a board with absolute powers to run practically every business having to do with agriculture in the country. We are giving the power to investigate, to require any person by order to give at any time such information regarding agricultural products as may be deemed necessary, and very great penalties are provided for failure to carry out the wishes of the board. I should like to hear the minister say something about what the formula will be under which purchases will be made and orders for purchase will be given. I hear it said so often that the farmer is the one responsible for high prices today.

Various investigations were taken in this regard. It is extremely interesting to read of the investigation which took place in the United States, where the purpose in mind with respect to the commission that was set up to look into the matter was to ascertain whether or not the farmer was the person responsible for the high prices paid by the consumer. The United States Department of Agriculture released the figures in August. They showed the degree to which the producer shares in the final price secured for consumer goods. On the basis of a 16-cent loaf of bread, the consumer would have to pay