

ment agencies conserve United States exchange just as private persons in the country are required to do.

Mr. ABBOTT: They do. The government buys supplies through the ordinary channels of trade. It is not a direct importer. I should qualify my statement there. We do import certain military supplies from the United States; but so far as ordinary civilian supplies are concerned, they are purchased through the ordinary channels of trade in Canada, the same as anybody else purchases them.

Mr. MERRITT: They are purchased here. The Commodity Prices Stabilization Corporation and the Canadian Commercial Corporation must be subject to government policy in that respect. Surely, if they are not—

Mr. ABBOTT: Of course they are.

Mr. MERRITT: Then, surely in these circumstances specific instructions should be given to these bodies to purchase in non-dollar countries where they can.

Mr. ABBOTT: Perhaps my hon. friend would be satisfied if I told him that the president of the Commodity Prices Stabilization Corporation is the chairman of the war-time prices and trade board, and is the assistant deputy minister of finance who is specifically charged with the administration of the emergency control division. So he can rest assured that the Commodity Prices Stabilization Corporation is observing the so-called austerity program.

Mr. MERRITT: I might observe, Mr. Chairman, that I would not be wholly satisfied with that since the minister is here himself and he could, if he would, give the assurance I asked for.

Mr. LENNARD: With respect to what the hon. member for Vancouver-Burrard had to say in connection with growers, I have particular reference to those who grow under glass, the greenhouse men. In answer to a suggestion of the hon. member for Temiscouata that the minister should have some direction, I might say that a crop of tomatoes grown under glass takes four months, and if there is to be any change in the regulations and there is an increase in the growing of tomatoes for the spring crop, if these regulations are taken off by the end of May it will be a non-profit crop for those who would be sacrificing another crop to grow foodstuffs needed in this country.

Another point I wish to bring up, a general point, is that the florists of the country—I do not mean the flower shops, but those who grow flowers—are not buying bulbs for spring planting. They do not know what the regu-

lations will be in May around Mother's day, when formerly great imports came from Florida and the southern states. They do not know whether the restrictions will be in force then. They do not know what to do at the moment, and that is the situation as far as the growing trade in eastern Canada is concerned. I know something about the matter, and I can assure the committee that these people do not know where they stand. Someone has foolishly told them that these restrictions will be lifted about March 31. I am sure that is not the case, but they do not know that, and the whole thing is in a muddle.

Mr. ABBOTT: I received a delegation from the vegetable growers, and they brought up the question whether they could get an assurance as to how long the restrictions would be in effect. They referred to the growing of tomatoes and lettuce under glass and to the expansion of hothouses. I told them—and I am sure they were not surprised—that I could not give any assurance that this measure was a protectionist measure and that anybody who expanded the production of hothouse tomatoes or lettuce must take whatever business risks were involved in doing so under our system. If they planted and the restrictions were still on, they would make a handsome profit and if they planted and the restrictions were not on, they would not. That is a part of the system, and I told them I could give no assurance as to when the restrictions would be taken off. They were not on as a protectionist measure but as an emergency measure, and that was a business risk which they would really have to assess for themselves.

Mr. FULTON: That is not a business risk. That has been the objection to so many of these things. Government interference with the ordinary cycle of marketing, whether necessary or not, creates hazards that cannot be called business risks. No one has asked that this be turned into a protective measure. But you have interfered with the Canadian economy and we say that you should now try to alleviate the effects of that interference as much as you can. Where you have created tremendous uncertainty, try to minimize that uncertainty by introducing a little certainty. If you tell them, "We will not take it off for six months or even three months", you will give them that degree of certainty. That is not a protective measure. It is a measure of common sense, and to refuse to do it is to blind your eyes to the disastrous effects that these things are having, effects which they need not have at all.