

Agricultural Products Act

marketing act under the then Minister of Agriculture, the Hon. Robert Weir. At that time we heard all these arguments that are being presented now coming from the Liberals then on the other side of the house. There were allegations concerning bureaucrats, dictators and the fact that they were ruining Canada.

After the election, when apparently the people of Canada were persuaded that they were bureaucrats and the Liberal government came back to this house, that government immediately sent the national agricultural marketing act to the supreme court, which declared it unconstitutional. We now hear the same arguments, only reversed. The official opposition now says that the shoe is on the other foot and everything the government is doing today is unconstitutional. For approximately thirty years the farmers of Canada have been asking for marketing legislation which would give stabilized marketing in this country. The constitutional issue has been consistently used as a means of preventing them from getting that legislation.

During the war, for the purpose of getting greater production, we had stabilized marketing in this country. Then the farmers realized more than ever just what stabilized markets meant. Through their organizations, they are not going to stand for this constitutional question being used as a means of preventing them from obtaining stabilized markets such as they obtained during the war; make no mistake about that. The farmers' organizations are well led today. Remember, too, that there is an alternative to the two old parties and, because of that alternative, we find both the old parties a little more zealous in their attitude towards marketing legislation. I believe we will eventually get some marketing legislation by means of which it will be possible to do some of the things we in the C.C.F. have been wanting to do for agriculture for a great many years.

Speaking on this bill a short time ago, the minister stated that one of the reasons for bringing in this legislation was to compensate the farmers for the prices they had received during the war for some of their agricultural products. I wonder if he thinks that these three contracts for 160 million pounds of bacon—I doubt whether he will be able to deliver it—50 million pounds of cheese and 46 million dozen eggs, are going to compensate the farmers for the lower prices they received during the several years of war and immediately thereafter. I do not think they will. To my way of thinking, this bill we have before us today is simply the obituary of organized marketing as we knew

it during the war. It is just a makeshift bill to carry these three contracts on for one year.

If the Minister of Agriculture had actually been interested in maintaining stabilized markets for the farmers of this country after the war, immediately after the war was over he would have introduced a marketing act under which he could have stabilized the markets of this country and supplied the British market. Instead of that, from year to year, we have had this act brought before the house to be continued for one year. All this time the minister has criticized the British government—

Mr. Gardiner: Will the member permit a question?

Mr. Wright: Yes.

Mr. Gardiner: Does the member not agree that there are four or five products handled under what we generally call the floor prices legislation, the agricultural prices support act?

Mr. Wright: There is only one other product that is being handled on the export market, and that is wheat.

Mr. Gardiner: Oh, no; we have been handling beans under this legislation and we have been handling potatoes and apples. At the moment we are also handling the fifty-eight cent floor price on butter.

Mr. Wright: Yes, I agree about the floor prices, but I am talking about the export market.

Mr. Gardiner: Beans were exported.

Mr. Wright: I am talking about maintaining markets for our export products. I am certain of this, that if the Minister of Agriculture had introduced the proper legislation into this house at the end of the war and had maintained a reasonable relationship between the price of grain, dairy products and meat products, our production of these products would be greater than it is today. We would have had a market for those agricultural products in Great Britain because the people of Great Britain are still eating. Britain is obtaining these products from other sources because we failed to produce them in this country and we failed to produce them because the legislation we had reduced production.

At one time the Minister of Agriculture was the premier of my province and the minister of agriculture in that province.

Mr. Gardiner: No, never minister of agriculture.

Mr. Wright: The minister was the premier, then, if not the provincial minister of agriculture. While he was premier he stated that one of the things western Canada needed was

[Mr. Wright.]