

Agricultural Products Board

On May 28, 1931, as reported on pages 2067 and 2068 of *Hansard*, I quoted the prevailing price for No. 1 pasteurized creamery butter as being 21 cents to 21½ cents per pound. Then followed a lengthy discussion and everyone was asking the minister if butter had reached rock bottom—rock bottom for solid butter—and he could not tell. Then on May 29, 1931, as reported on page 2091 of *Hansard*, in answer to a question by myself, the then minister of agriculture stated that 750,000 pounds of Australian butter had been released at 32 cents. It is interesting to note that, in the first place, the Bennett organization brought in huge quantities of butter from outside to dump on the home market in order to cause the price to fall, and to complain that on account of Liberal policies the price of butter had fallen by a few cents from 39 cents. Then, after the harm was done, Mr. Bennett and his intelligentsia tried to improve conditions by raising the tariff very high.

In sessional paper No. 318, dated June 8, 1931, the government gave the following information, that under the general tariff rate applicable to butter, and established by Mr. Bennett, 14 cents per pound was the highest tariff. I remember that during the election he told the farmers, "You make no money on your butter. I shall help you by imposing a high tariff on butter which will be your salvation. I am the man who will do it". He did it, and what was the result? Butter reached the lowest price in forty years. With the highest tariff the price of butter fell to rock bottom. The sessional paper to which I have referred stated also that during the last 10 years—that is previous to 1931—and the last 20 years, 18½ to 18¾ cents was the lowest price at which butter sold since May 1904, when the price fell to 14¾ cents.

This illustration will serve to explain the situation to the farmers who sent the postcards asking for a high tariff on vegetable oils. There are some people who may have good intentions who would tell the farmer that the price of butter will be higher if there is a high tariff on vegetable oils. The same story may repeat itself, and it is a very dangerous proposition. I prefer the policies of the present Minister of Agriculture to those of any minister of agriculture under Mr. Bennett. But their policies were fallacious. Consider this, that with the highest tariff, 14 cents, the price of butter was only approximately 18 cents, while now without such a high tariff and with the assistance of the Department of Agriculture the price of butter is four times greater. This must be a good

thing for the farmers. Everyone has not the means, especially those who have large families, to pay the high price for butter. They may use a substitute like peanut butter or margarine, especially in the cities, if those products sell at a lower figure. Does this create any difficulty for the farmer? Not at all, because the home production of butter is sold at a reasonable price, thanks to the intelligent policies of the Minister of Agriculture.

I continued to ask questions, and on July 28, 1931, page 4248 of *Hansard*, I asked:

Why did the price of butter drop from 40 cents a pound last year to 20 cents per pound this year, while the price of milk has remained at the same level for the past 5 years?

Hon. Robert Weir (Minister of Agriculture): The only reason that can be given is that we are on an export basis with regard to butter and not with regard to whole milk.

That was right. On May 26, 1931, I asked the following question as recorded at page 2006 of *Hansard*:

If the production of butter is less than the consumption, is it necessary to import butter from outside?

Mr. Weir (Melfort): Yes.

He was the minister of agriculture.

In any discussion of the problems of the dairy business from the point of view of the consumer as well as the producer, we must take into consideration the wisdom of the Minister of Agriculture and of his aides in carrying out a policy which is satisfactory to the country at large. Here we have a picture of the Conservative policy of olden days, and the practical policy of this government with regard to agriculture.

Mr. Gardiner: When we went into committee I was asked a question by the hon. member for Brant-Wentworth and I told him I did not have the figures before me. I made a guess at them which was not very far away from the facts, but I think I ought to put the facts on the record. I was asked how much butter was being imported. Up to the month of September, we had imported 2,520,000 pounds. This year, on October 1, the stocks of butter were 62,069,000 pounds. There is still approximately 11,800,000 pounds of butter to be imported, made up of 8,600,000 on government account and 3,200,000 by private traders. Those are the complete figures up to October 13.

Mr. Charlton: Is that the total for the year?

Mr. Gardiner: The total figures for the imports since we entered into the present arrangement. Of course, there were some imports earlier in the year under the old