

parity with the retail price of beef, what good is the Act?

Notwithstanding the many difficulties I see in the operation of this measure, I would not vote against it. At its worst it cannot be worse than what we have to-day. I am hopeful that out of the many complicated phases of the Bill something practical and beneficial may be worked out.

Hon. J. E. SINCLAIR: Honourable senators, my remarks will be directed more to the way in which the Bill may apply to that part of Canada from which I come, than to its general application, though to some extent I shall deal with this phase also.

I was rather amused by the speech of the honourable member from Saskatchewan (Hon. Mr. Gillis). He objected to the honourable leader on this side (Hon. Mr. Dandurand) characterizing the proposed measure as a Western Bill, but shortly afterwards he suggested very mildly that it would be well to exclude the main natural product of the Prairie Provinces, grain, from the operation of the Bill.

I shall not go so far with respect to the natural products of Eastern Canada. I think it is generally conceded by those who have followed the debates on the Bill from the time of its introduction in the Commons that something is needed to help the farmer, the producer and the labourer in this trying period through which Canada is passing. Whether the Bill will do all that is hoped for by those who are most in favour of it is a matter of conjecture, but I think it is only fair that we should analyse the measure and do our best to improve it.

One general feature I do not like. The Bill confers very wide powers on a board to be appointed by the Government. It is admitted by its warmest supporters that Parliament has never yet granted the Government such extensive powers. I think we have already gone too far in this direction. Particularly in recent years, there has been a tendency to confer wide discretion on ministers of the Crown and officers of the departments. Now it is proposed to confer powers which even the right honourable leader of this House has said he does not think any board would attempt to exercise.

The grave danger of granting wide discretionary powers to departmental officials is illustrated by an enactment of this session known as the Fruit and Honey Act, 1934. Honourable members will recall that I raised some objection to the Bill. I happened to be away when the amended Bill was returned to this House with an intimation of non-

concurrence in our amendments. Had I been present I should have stated my position. I take the opportunity to do so now, in accordance with the understanding arrived at with the leader of the House at the time.

Members of the Agricultural Committee will recollect that that Bill empowered the Minister to license dealers, brokers, commission agents, and so forth. I do not deem it necessary to read the section. When we asked for an explanation the Fruit Commissioner assured us that only a nominal licence fee would be charged, and he mentioned \$30 as the maximum. Some members of the Committee thought the fee was rather high. Since the Bill has become law the officials of the department have sent out copies of proposed regulations for the approval of those interested in the Act. I am surprised, as I know are others, to find that it is proposed by these regulations to license all dealers and traders, as well as every person who maintains one or more branches. A separate licence must be obtained for each branch. The regulation reads:

A licence issued under these provisions shall remain valid and effective until the 31st day of March following the date of issue, unless it is suspended or revoked. Such licence shall be renewable but shall automatically terminate unless the renewal fee is paid within 30 days after notice has been mailed by the Commissioner that payment is due.

Each application for a licence shall be accompanied by the licence fee of \$50 in the form of a money order, bank draft or certified cheque, payable to the Receiver General for Canada.

The annual renewal fee shall be \$50 and shall be remitted in the same manner.

Since the regulations were sent out on May 17, within two weeks from the time the Bill became law, the dealers of Prince Edward Island—I have no information with regard to the other provinces—have protested most strongly against such a licence fee being required of small dealers throughout the province. I should explain that in sections 30, 31, 32 and 33 of the Act the word "vegetable" is used where reference is made to the licensing of interprovincial traders. The insertion of this word after the word "fruit" extended the licensing regulations to the Root Vegetables Act, which covers almost all vegetables traded in, particularly in Eastern Canada. Under this Act the small country merchant who buys from three to ten carloads of potatoes or turnips each year and ships them outside the province is required by the regulations to take out a licence at an annual cost of \$50.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: For sending the goods over to Halifax?