

Agricultural Products Act

deals with the British government, either on a bilateral basis or on a blocked credit basis. By "blocked credit" I mean that we would take payment in British sterling which might be converted later on.

The government is anxious to get this measure through second reading. There are a number of other points I should like to mention, but they have been mentioned by other members who have spoken from this group. I think the subject has been rather well covered so I shall not detain the house any longer at this time.

Mr. J. G. Diefenbaker (Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I will not detain the house for long. The statement made by the hon. gentleman who has just taken his seat, to the effect that the constitution must serve the people rather than the people serving the constitution, is a fine-sounding aphorism. It is one that embodies the attitude taken by the leader of the C.C.F. in the province of British Columbia approximately two years ago when he said, in effect, that if the constitution gets in our way we will know what to do with the constitution.

That was the attitude taken in the province of Saskatchewan too.

Mr. MacInnis: You had better quote your authority.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Legislation was introduced in that province which was highly desirable in its terms, and when it was declared beyond the powers of the legislature the premier of the province of Saskatchewan made some very scathing remarks about the judiciary that had decided the question of the constitutionality of the measure. The question of the constitutionality of this bill has, however, been dealt with at length and I shall say no more at this time.

There are a few observations I intend to make on this matter with a view to securing a statement from the Minister of Agriculture concerning the loss of the British market to so large an extent within the last two years. The hon. gentleman who just took his seat said that he hoped something would be done to provide for an increase in the exports of agricultural products to the United Kingdom. He indicated that it was necessary to maintain that market. I am in agreement with him. I know the Minister of Agriculture agrees with that, too, for in speaking on March 14, 1947, at page 1394 of *Hansard*, he said that the British market was our best market—

—our most secure market, and the one in which we have the best chance over a long period of time of being paid for our commodities.

While all of us can look back and see where mistakes are made, foresight does not

[Mr. Moore.]

come so easily to us. However, the Minister of Agriculture will have to agree that, as a prophet—

Mr. Gardiner: It is still correct; I did not make prophecies.

Mr. Diefenbaker:—his prophecies have not turned out as he indicated they would.

Then, sir, the member who just took his seat asked the government to do something with a view to increasing our exports of agricultural products to the United Kingdom. As he spoke I thought that some member from that side of the house in the C.C.F. group might have clarified the situation and explained why it is that the government of the United Kingdom, during the past year or two, has been entering into so many agreements with continental Europe for farm products which ordinarily could have been imported from Canada. I am going to ask the minister when he speaks on this matter to place the situation regarding the market in the United Kingdom before this country.

Canada's production of agricultural products is falling, regardless of the contracts we have with the United Kingdom, and Canada has been unable to fulfil those contracts even with this legislation in effect.

Before the Minister of Agriculture went to England last December with a view to negotiating a price for Canada's wheat, he dealt at some length with the loss of our markets for agricultural products in Great Britain. As reported by the British United Press, he said this:

The Minister of Agriculture blamed the "continuing officials" of the British government for the policy of slashing food purchases from Canada. He charged that they preferred to deal with European countries, rather than with Canada.

He also said that when he went over to England he intended to do what he could to carry Canada's case to the British people, both in public addresses and in interviews with the press. He blamed the continuing officials for the policy of the United Kingdom in not purchasing farm products from Canada to the degree that they previously had. I should like to ask him—and I think the people of this country have a right to know—to explain why the United Kingdom is entering into agreements with countries behind the iron curtain for agricultural products. The United Kingdom, being our important and secure market, should be preserved for this country.

I will now refer to one contract that affects Canada. I am reading from the *Board of Trade Journal* dated February 12, 1947.

We had had one or two trading agreements with Poland since the end of the war but the agreement signed last month was a much more ambitious thing. It was, in fact, a five-year trade and finance