

*Agricultural Products Act*

By its exercise of these extraordinary powers and by its adventures in extra trading, the government has not given stability of markets or prices to the farmer. The question then arises, what good purpose is being served by continuing these powers? I should like to ask, would it not be better to return control to the farmers themselves? Certainly they could not possibly make a worse mess of affairs than the government has done.

During the war compulsion was used on our farmers and on the whole population of Canada to deliver quantities of bacon, cheese and these other products to Great Britain. This was done as part of our war effort and, at that time, it needed to be done. The Canadian population was rationed. We were told we could only have so much cheese, so much bacon, so much of this and that. As a result of that rationing, as well as the efforts made to increase production, sufficient bacon and other food products were available to send to Britain in large quantities. After these commodities were rationed, the surplus was shipped abroad.

Back in 1947, the minister admitted we would have to go back to taking what was surplus to our own needs in order to fill our overseas contracts. I think I have a quotation to show that—

**Mr. Gardiner:** You do not need to look it up, I will agree.

**Mr. Harkness:** On February 28, 1947, at page 935 of *Hansard*, the minister said:

—everyone anticipates that in due course we shall need to go back to taking what is surplus, over and above what is utilized, and fill our contracts with that, and we shall have to make our contracts conform to the quantity that we can obtain in that way.

I submit, Mr. Speaker, we have reached that time. As a matter of fact, with the end of rationing we were no longer able to meet our commitments to Great Britain. The minister well knows he has not been able to get enough bacon, cheese or any of the other commodities during the past year. The reason for this was that the products were going into the home market. The powers the minister has under this act are ineffective today. This is another reason why the whole thing should be thrown out the window. Without rationing it can no longer be effective.

From what the minister said the other day it is clear that he considers these great powers he has now under the act are really a big club he holds in his hand with which he can threaten the processors and producers of agricultural products in this country. He says he has been able to get enough of these products to send overseas. He has not been able to get enough and, so far as I can see, if he attempted to exercise these powers and

[Mr. Harkness.]

requisition bacon and other products to meet these contracts it would cause complete chaos in our price structure. If he took enough bacon to complete our contracts it would leave the home market short. He knows as well as I do what would happen then.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Golding):** Order. May I remind the hon. member that his time has expired.

**Mr. E. B. McKay (Weyburn):** Mr. Speaker, we have been hearing a great deal lately from our Progressive Conservative friends about the constitutionality of the measure before the house. In fact, for weeks we have been listening to the arguments advanced by them to the effect that the war emergency is over and these acts are no longer needed. They have stated this measure was flouting the constitution. Whether or not that is true, Mr. Speaker, I doubt very much if the man on the street cares a great deal.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** Is that the C.C.F. doctrine?

**Mr. McKay:** We are wasting time discussing this matter and I do not think it is justified. I do not think the man on the street cares whether the act is *intra vires* or *ultra vires*. He is concerned with the effect the act is going to have on his livelihood and that of his family. I do not think the veteran would care very much if an act flouted the constitution, if it gave him a larger pension for himself and family. I do not think the wage earner on the street would care very much if the act flouted the constitution, so long as it provided him with a decent job and a full dinner pail.

I do not think the farmer is concerned very much about it, either. When the market declines, he is very much concerned and he holds the government responsible for that situation. He would take the same attitude as was expressed in the bible, if I can remember it correctly, that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. In other words, the constitution was made for Canadians, and not Canadians for the constitution. I think the constitution is important and I do not want anyone to go away with the idea that I do not. It should not, however, stand in the way of progressive legislation when the welfare of large sections of our population is at stake.

Even at that, Mr. Speaker, I cannot see that the legislation before the house is unconstitutional. This bill only extends the life of the Agricultural Products Act for one year; that is all it does. The act gives the government authority to make contracts for the sale of agricultural products other than wheat during the transitional period from war to