

*The Address—Mr. Johnston*

people are so easily misled. The Minister of Agriculture is an expert at saying one thing today and another thing tomorrow.

When I was listening to him—and I always listen to him with a great deal of pleasure—I was shocked at his references to the great production of this country. It is true that this country is able to produce an abundance of agricultural goods; but when he was saying just a moment ago that we in Canada now could not supply the market, and when he said that when the FAO conference was requesting him to supply surplus products for world distribution he had to inform them that we had a very little surplus, I was shocked.

My mind went back immediately to what the minister said in December, 1948. I have not the exact speech here but the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Low) was mentioning it this year on February 28. I just want to put on the record, so that it will be clear following the minister's speech, what the hon. member for Peace River had to say in regard to the speech that the minister gave to the Canadian chamber of commerce in December of 1948. The hon. member for Peace River was speaking, and as reported at page 323 of *Hansard* he had this to say:

I should like to draw to the attention of this house the surpluses that are here in reality, or that could be here, but for the policies of this government—policies of taxation and restriction that discourage production.

I should like to read briefly from what the Minister of Agriculture said in a speech before the Canadian chamber of commerce in London in 1948.

I should like hon. members and the people of Canada to notice the difference between the statements made by the minister on this occasion today and those that he made in London a year ago. The quotation is:

"It is difficult for us to understand why anyone should expect us to be other than disappointed with the 1949 contracts. They provide for 160 million pounds of bacon, for 50 million pounds of cheese, and no cattle or beef."

Where is the great production the minister was talking about a moment ago? Then the hon. member for Peace River goes on:

A little further along, he says:

There are no dollars available in the United Kingdom with which to purchase Canadian apples. Partly because of this we have financed the pulling out of 240,000 apple trees in Nova Scotia. There are no dollars available with which to purchase Canadian fish.

Where are those great markets the minister was just talking about? Where is this extra production that he was talking about? They are finding markets—how? Certainly we have no surpluses to export now because we have been destroying, and discouraging production in this country. The hon. member goes on:

I suppose if it were possible to pull out the fish beds, the government would do that, and pay for

it. It is a policy of discouraging and restricting production. I say that when you do that you are making it impossible for the Canadian people to help a world that is sadly lacking in food.

It is important for us to keep in mind that the minister went over to England, and negotiated with the British people, not for 160 million pounds of bacon. At another point in his speech the minister said:

"All of our discussions on food bulk contracts were proceeding satisfactorily until difficulties arose in adjusting the relationship between dollars and sterling. We were aiming at being able to provide the United Kingdom with 350 million pounds of bacon, 125 million pounds of cheese, 75 million dozens of eggs and having 400,000 head of cattle which we could dispose of either to the United States or to the United Kingdom."

I think that answers effectively the question of what has happened to our production and our markets.

I want to turn to another point which closely follows those remarks I have just read and it greatly concerns the agriculturists of today. In view of the fact that we have been rapidly losing our markets over the years, and particularly the last while, the people in agriculture in Canada are greatly discouraged. It will be of interest to them to note that the Agricultural Prices Support Act may be made permanent. So far it has been on a yearly basis, but now it is proposed to make it permanent legislation, something which the Social Credit members of this house and others have been advocating for a long time.

When speaking at the C.F.A. convention at Niagara Falls on December 1, the Minister of Agriculture said:

Farmers cannot expect floor prices to be set at the highest level prevailing during the last three years. In most cases the price was set about ten per cent lower than the highest level.

Let me point out to the Minister of Agriculture that farmers particularly are concerned about this support price because of the dropping markets. One remembers that during the war years this government particularly announced to the farmers that they were not going to lose money because they were selling goods then at less than the world market price. I was interested just the other day in an article which appeared in the *Ottawa Citizen* of Monday, March 6, 1950, in regard to this matter. It is headed "Butter Price Slash Would Alarm Farmers" and reads in part as follows:

The butter price now is supported at 58 cents a pound. Dairy experts predicted in Ottawa Friday that agriculture minister Gardiner will announce shortly a drop of five or six cents a pound in the floor price.

Mr. Milburn was speaking at this convention of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture. The article goes on to say:

Mr. Milburn said in a statement that there is a downward trend in agricultural prices and that eventually all other prices will fall.