

strawberries. In zone No. 1, Ontario and Quebec, the strawberry grower receives 30 cents. In zone No. 2, the maritime provinces, the price drops to 27 cents, and in zone No. 3, British Columbia, the price is also down to 27 cents. Tell me why a strawberry grower in Ontario, with the huge market in this area, should get more at this season of the year than a grower in the maritime provinces or in British Columbia. The growers in central Canada have cheaper land; they have a better market, and they have cheaper labour. That is one situation. But let us see what happens when the table is turned, when they are packing their surplus in this area to compete with those who pack berries in the maritimes and British Columbia. Strangely enough the central packer again gets the benefit. After June 24 the price in Ontario and Quebec drops to 19 cents, while in the maritimes and British Columbia it is held at 22 cents. Let me ask this question. When conditions are in favour of the grower; when prices are high, with the new production coming on the market, why does the eastern producer benefit to the extent of three cents a quart; then, when it comes to producing for packing house competition with British Columbia and the maritime provinces, why should we find the central packer paying a price of 19 cents as against 22 cents which must be paid by the packer in British Columbia and the maritimes?

I know the Minister of Finance resents any criticism of the wartime prices and trade board, and I know that this board does not welcome suggestions from members of parliament. Under our modern bureaucracy we have been relegated to the background to the extent that it is an insult to our wartime prices and trade board, and to our bureaucrats, to dare offer a suggestion as the representatives of the people. I do not want anyone to accuse me of speaking for votes on this matter, because I do not happen to have any strawberry growers in my riding, and I suppose running true to human nature most of my constituents would like to get strawberries even in the early season just as cheaply as possible. Apart from that, however, from long experience in British Columbia I know that all the people of that province will resent the idea of an unfair discrimination against the growers of British Columbia and the maritimes, and an unfair preference to the growers of central Canada. When a government undertakes to move into the discreet level above which profits may be made, or to dictate the discreet line along which any business must operate, that government will find that in doing so it is doing more harm

than good. If ceilings are to be fixed and floors established, they can be levelled out; it can be arranged upon a basis under which a reasonable amount of competition can exist between the floor and the ceiling. What we want to prevent in war time as in peace time is the unreasonable exploitation of the consumer in the consumers' market. We never want to undertake to restrict competition or to destroy the incentive of a reasonable and fair reward.

This, Mr. Speaker, is a splendid example of the need for reform in the wartime prices and trade board. It is typical of the harsh and arbitrary measures that are too often adopted by this board without the necessary experience to qualify them to dictate the policy and programme of the many businesses and of the farmers and producers upon whom they have fastened like a straitjacket an army of regulations and controls that now need revision, and many of which should be done away with. I congratulate the hon. member for Fraser Valley on bringing this matter to the attention of parliament, and I hope the minister responsible for this order will see that the kind of inequality, the kind of discrimination, the kind of preference and the kind of sectional differences that appear here are eliminated.

Mr. J. H. BLACKMORE (Lethbridge): Mr. Speaker, I should like to support the hon. member for Fraser Valley (Mr. Cruickshank). Only recently I was contending, on behalf of the beef producers in my constituency, that they were suffering from similar foolhardiness in the management of prices. I think the hon. member for Vancouver-Burrard (Mr. McGeer) was fully justified in saying what he did, and I support his remarks. In the first place let me say that I favour the principle of a ceiling and a floor.

Mr. ILSLEY: So does everybody, but no one is ever satisfied with any price that is set. It is the other fellow's price.

Mr. BLACKMORE: I can understand why the minister makes that statement, and I must say that I have great sympathy for him in the difficult position in which he finds himself. But may I say that just as long as the minister and his government persist in trying to manage the affairs of this country under an outworn, outmoded and ineffective financial system, he will continue to find himself in this situation. That may sound strange, but right things have sounded strange before this. The floor and ceiling must be fair to both producer and consumer. I am sure the minister will agree with that.