

Canadian Commercial Corporation

Mr. Gillis: I had not intended saying anything in this debate, but I am not exactly satisfied with the answer just given by the minister to the hon. member for Moose Jaw in connection with the marketing of Nova Scotia apples. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre has said we are supporting the principle of the bill—and we are. But we are not supporting it merely as an agency to regulate, assist and help private enterprise when they get stuck. The basis of our support is that this is a government agency which steps in where private enterprise has fallen down, and that it will market the products of this country as a government agency, with any benefits or profits going to the government.

The apple industry of Nova Scotia is just another industry that has been siphoned off owing to the failure of private enterprise in the field of marketing. Only three or four months ago the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggart was in England. He stated in the house, and I believe accurately, that the people of Britain want Nova Scotia apples, but they cannot get them. I believe the chief reason for their not being able to get them is the difference in currency. We have depreciated the British pound to the point where they cannot afford to trade with us.

Unless some financial arrangement is made by the government for the marketing of Nova Scotia apples that industry will die out. Government policy is scrapping it. I have heard hon. members to my right make reference to the last by-election in the Annapolis valley. In my view the chief reason for the government's candidate having lost was the government's attitude toward scrapping the main industry of the valley. They are now paying for the uprooting of that industry by tearing up the trees and going into mixed farming.

If the government is to use the taxpayers' money for the maintenance of this commercial organization, I see no reason in the world why the government should not use it to support that industry. The hon. member for Rosetown-Biggart has said that our market is there, but that Britain cannot take our apples because of the difference in currency. That being so, I say it should be the responsibility of this agency to barter our apples for something from the old country which could be sold in Canada, thus getting around the currency difficulty.

I thought the minister spoke too quickly when he said our apples were not wanted in Britain. I am sure they are wanted. But until we get around the currency difficulty we will not market them; and the way to get

around that difficulty is to barter Nova Scotia apples for something we can use in Canada.

Mr. Nowlan: Mr. Chairman, I had not intended taking part in this debate, but since the minister raised the question of Nova Scotia apples and some facetious remarks were made, I believe one or two points should be cleared up in this connection. In so far as the remarks of the hon. member for Cape Breton South are concerned, I hope he is not suggesting that the failure of marketing in the Annapolis valley was due entirely to the failure of private enterprise. As a matter of fact, I think most hon. members know that the marketing was carried out by a board upon which were represented all branches of the industry. Although there have been difficulties in marketing, and very real difficulties, those were due to the exchange restrictions and not to the failure of private enterprise.

I notice the minister says that apples could not be given away, but I would ask his co-operation in clearing up any misunderstanding in this regard. I am surprised to know that the Canadian Commercial Corporation had any apples to give away. I think the minister will be ready to state that the corporation never at any time took over any apples. During the past year the marketing was carried on by the government agency. We did not ask the corporation to take it over, nor did the corporation take it over.

I would like to know when the corporation did offer apples to Great Britain and when the British refused them. I ask that in view of the fact that we were able to sell apples at a low price to Belgium, despite what the Minister of Agriculture said the other day, and at the same time Belgium was selling an inferior product to Great Britain at a higher price. I understand also that Great Britain imported apples of a poor quality from Italy, a former belligerent, a country with which I understand we have not yet arranged terms of peace. I rose simply to suggest that this misunderstanding should be cleared up.

Mr. Howe: The Canadian Commercial Corporation does not deal in apples. I was referring to the government who had conveyed an offer of apples which had been received from one of the co-operatives, not the Nova Scotia co-operative. That offer was conveyed to England but was turned down.

Mr. Nowlan: It was the British Columbia co-operative, I presume.

Mr. Howe: We sent to the United Kingdom a good supply of Nova Scotia applesauce and dried apples which was delivered free on board ship. I think these two transactions indicate that there is not a great market for apples in England.