

was appointed to his present position. For many months many of us have been studying this question and hoping for the creation of this board. May I say here that just as the minister spoke of the cooperation offered by other hon. members and of the absence of partisan party politics in the consideration of this matter, so I wish to express my appreciation of the attitude of the minister in welcoming that cooperation and assistance and in meeting on common ground those who are sincerely interested in agriculture and who believe that by this means some good may be done.

It has been announced that for certain reasons this policy cannot be initiated at the present time, but we have been told that a commission will be appointed to study this question and perhaps settle some of the doubts and meet some of the difficulties which are now apparent. It is hoped that this will make it possible at some future time—I hope in the very near future—to establish such a board. Naturally, with others who have been thinking along these lines, I am disappointed that it is not possible to proceed with the creation of this board at this time. I have no doubt the minister shares that disappointment, but I quite understand that there are three distinct difficulties which stand in the way of the actual appointment of such a board and the carrying out of such a plan at the present time. First, there is the question of whether the plan itself is absolutely sound. Personally I am convinced that it is, but that does not necessarily mean that I am right and all who think otherwise are wrong. Then there is the question that undoubtedly has occurred to the government, as to the reception such a board would receive on the part of those who it is hoped will be the chief beneficiaries of the plan, the farmers themselves. Again I say that as far as I have been able to ascertain the farmers in general are not only prepared to enter into such an arrangement but they are also prepared to make it self-supporting and semi-cooperative, and their only regret is that they have not been able to do so before this time. But again I can only speak for that part of the farming population with which I am intimately acquainted.

The most serious aspect of all, and the consideration in which, in spite of my own disappointment, I believe possibly wisdom has been shown in this delay, is the relation of this plan to the coming Imperial conference. In connection with any plan of marketing, two main factors must be considered, the producers who wish to sell their goods and the consumers whom it is hoped will purchase

those goods. We must consider our own experience and the experience of other countries. For example, Australia is working under the Patterson scheme, which this proposal might resemble, but they are not permitted to send their butter to this country because of the dumping clause. It would be fatal to this plan if we were to find out too late that that was the attitude of Great Britain. I believe there is a general misapprehension as to the details of this proposal; I cannot indicate what the bill will contain because that is in the hands of the gods, but I can indicate what is in my mind and in the minds of many others who have discussed this matter.

Throughout the years under successive ministers much good work has been done by the Department of Agriculture, but in the main the work has been along the lines of improving marketing methods and the farm products themselves. In this field much good has been accomplished. I believe that this country has been fortunate in the past and is at the present time in the quality of its ministers of agriculture. They have been men who have had a wide and intimate knowledge of farming matters, they have had a sincere desire to do what was best for agriculture. Under their administration and partly with the assistance of the department, a foundation has been laid without which no marketing plan could succeed. We have a foundation of good products, good live stock and poultry; we have our systems of grading. These things have made it possible at this time to say that in the main we can supply that class and quality of farm products which is essential if we are to enter the British market in competition with other countries, principally Denmark. While good work has been done, this work is set at naught unless the product can be sold at a price which will at least meet the cost of production and leave a small profit for the time and labour expended and to cover the capital costs represented by the plant. That this is not the case at the present time is so well known that I do not need to add further arguments.

The hopelessly disorganized condition of the farmer and the low prices which he is receiving for his products have made it obvious that some action must be taken along the lines of better marketing methods. This condition is tragic because the population of our farms is slowly but surely moving towards bankruptcy. It is not only a bankruptcy of fortune, of bank account and pocketbook but a bankruptcy of ambition and morale. Although it must be admitted that it is no small misfortune which can discourage the