

Agricultural Products Act

that the Progressive Conservatives are trying, and have been trying, to ride two horses at the same time. I agree that they did not vote against the Anglo-Canadian wheat agreement; they certainly did not call for a vote and vote against it. They have done everything since it was passed to make it impossible for the operation of that agreement to reflect increased prosperity for agriculture in this country. They have continually tried to drive the government into the position—and have been all too successful at times—of removing price controls and to some extent cancelling the benefits of the agreement.

With respect to coarse grains, which I want to deal with particularly, I wish to reiterate the position I took last year when the matter was under discussion. At that time I put on the record a series of resolutions passed by the Saskatchewan wheat pool, the biggest farm organization in the country. Year after year they demanded that coarse grains be marketed in the same manner as wheat—that is, through a marketing agency set up by the dominion government. That is still our position; and I believe it could be done under the Agricultural Products Act. It could be done in other ways also; but Bill 135 of last year, which would make the wheat board the actual marketing agency for coarse grains, was a good bill. Criticism is directed against the government, and particularly certain members of it, who were instrumental at that time in preventing this operation from taking place.

I have before me sessional paper 110, a return of the correspondence between the Minister of Trade and Commerce and the present Minister of Justice, who was then premier of Manitoba. All through this correspondence the Minister of Justice, then premier, was pointing out that in the first place he did not believe it was necessary to have conjoint or complementary legislation by the provinces to make Bill 135 effective. In letters dated March 23, 1948, and March 16, 1948, he asks the Minister of Trade and Commerce to give a legal ruling as to why this should be necessary. Since the beginning of this session, when the hon. gentleman has been Minister of Justice, I have tried on three separate occasions to get him to give a ruling whether it is necessary to have this conjoint or complementary legislation by the provinces, but so far he has failed to do so.

[Mr. Bentley.]

Surely the man who was premier of a province, and who while premier was hand in glove with the Tory party in that province—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Bentley: Oh, I know they fight back and forth here.

Mr. Ross (Souris): There are accidents in the best of families.

Mr. Bentley:—and the government of whose province is still hand in glove with the Tory party, should be in a position now as Liberal Minister of Justice to tell this house whether that conjoint or complementary legislation is necessary. The Minister of Trade and Commerce was infinitely more honest in his approach; for he said flatly, as I quoted on another occasion this session, that he was not concerned with the question whether it was necessary to have this legislation in order to make Bill 135 effective, but he wished to be sure the provinces wanted it.

Again I bring back the blame to Premier Garson of Manitoba, because the government of Alberta said they would call a session to discuss the matter of conjoint or complementary legislation if the government of Manitoba would do so, but Manitoba under Premier Garson failed to take any action. As a consequence neither Alberta nor Manitoba has passed that legislation yet, though I understand strong representations are being made to Premier Manning of Alberta urging that this legislation be passed now. Of course I cannot say what he will do, but it is to be hoped that this will be done. I am just informed by an Alberta member that the government of his province has offered to pass the legislation. That will put the matter squarely up to Manitoba, and both Liberals and Tories will have an opportunity to show exactly where they stand.

Just the other day I noticed a statement by the Minister of Trade and Commerce dealing with this matter, at page 1421 of *Hansard* for March 14. He was referring to the resolution which had been passed by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, and he said:

In the first place, if this resolution is intended to suggest that the Canadian wheat board as now constituted does not function in the best interests of the Canadian producers, this is a suggestion which I strenuously deny.