

Agricultural Prices Support Act

simply renewing these acts without any assurance as to what action the government is going to take under them.

Mr. H. H. Hatfield (Victoria-Carleton): I am pleased, Mr. Speaker, that the minister is renewing this act. He gave a glowing account of it when he introduced it in the house in July, 1944. I should like to read some of his statements. As reported at page 5581 of *Hansard* of that year the minister, in introducing the act, quoted the views of a Liberal convention as follows:

We advocate a policy under which Canada will provide security for farmers and fishermen by safeguarding against inflation now and by guaranteeing minimum prices for their products against collapse of prices after the war.

Then he quoted a speech he made at London, Ontario, on October 15.

Speaking at London, Ontario, on October 15, I made this statement as Minister of Agriculture when speaking to a group of people, representatives of agriculture in that area, got together by the Kiwanis club, as reported in the *Windsor Star* of October 16:

"In placing ceilings upon products, with limited subsidies now, the government is assuming responsibility to maintain floors until this country is re-established after the war. The government owes this to the farmers who have maintained production under ceilings, and also owes it to the men and women who will return from the services to the farms."

Then he continued:

On December 2, 1943, the Prime Minister (Hon. Mr. Mackenzie King), speaking over the radio said: "As an essential part of its post-war policy the government intends to ask parliament, at the next session, to place a floor under the prices of the main farm products."

In the speech from the throne this statement was made:

To ensure economic stability for agriculture, you will be asked to make provision for a price floor for staple farm products.

Speaking to the house on the bill which set up the act, the minister said it would include all farm products except wheat. He was asked numerous questions at that time and, as reported at page 5612 of *Hansard* of 1944, he said:

I am asked, what will they do with all that surplus, will they get rid of it? I can assure hon. members that if I am minister charged with the task, there will not be any of it that will be burned or dumped into the ocean or into the lake. One thing has been demonstrated to us during the war, and as a matter of fact we have always known it. We have always known that there are areas in the world where there are famines from time to time . . . I am not worrying about finding some place where we can put the surplus food of a country that has only twelve million people in it to start with.

Then after the dinner recess:

Before the dinner recess I was dealing with some of the points that were suggested by hon. members opposite, particularly the questions raised

[Mr. Wright.]

by the hon. member for Lake Centre (Mr. Diefenbaker) and the hon. member for Lethbridge (Mr. Blackmore). Perhaps I can best sum up the answers I should like to give to those questions by saying that it would not be fair to the farmers of Canada to do certain things in the transition period.

First, I should say it would not be fair to order them, immediately the war is over, to reduce production to the level at which it is certain the commodities could be sold at a given price. I was asked what we were going to do, provided that we had great surpluses, and I call attention to what I have just stated as an answer to that question, and to repeat what I said just before the dinner recess. During this war period we have been asked to increase production to the limit in order to provide food to those of our allies who require it, as well as to our own people. I repeat that it would be unfair to the farmers, immediately the war is over, to say they must reduce their production to the point where everything they produce can be disposed of at a given price. And I would state that this bill contains provision for dealing with a situation where a given price is essential for uncontrolled production during the transition period.

Then I should say it would be unfair to the farmer immediately to require him to sell at the cost of production.

When the bill was introduced the minister said that he would not allow any farm product to go down to the cost of production. He assured the farmers of this country that so long as he was Minister of Agriculture they would receive prices above the cost of production. That principle has not been carried out.

I am disappointed in the regulations made under the act on the statute books. They do not look anything like the bill which the minister introduced in the house, and they have not been used in the way that the minister said they would be used when he introduced the bill, as will be found in his speeches in *Hansard*. He said that he would set up a board, and that the duty of the board would be to deal with the prices of agricultural products across Canada, except wheat, at any time that the price went below the cost of production. When that happened the board was supposed to step in and put on a floor price above the cost of production. That board has not done its duty as laid down by the minister in the speech he made when he introduced the bill. Every time that we asked for a floor price, or a support price, on potatoes a number of delegations had to come to Ottawa to see the minister, and we had to get support from the other provinces to persuade the minister to put a support price under potatoes.

I was surprised to read in the *Saint John Telegraph-Journal* of March 21 that Mr. Duffie had advised a meeting of 200 potato growers at Grand Falls to form a co-operative. I quote from the article:

The decision followed a report by T. E. Duffie on conferences in Ottawa early this month with