

Agricultural Products Board

Mr. Browne (St. John's West): I was paired with the hon. member for Yukon-Mackenzie River (Mr. Simmons). Mr. Speaker, had I voted, I would have voted against your ruling.

Mr. Speaker: Is the house ready for the question?

Mr. P. E. Wright (Melfort): Mr. Speaker, when the house rose on Saturday night I was speaking on the amendment. I wish to continue the remarks I was making at that time, although they will have to be changed somewhat, owing to the fact that you have ruled the amendment out of order.

I was pointing out at that time that ministers of the crown, including the Minister of Finance (Mr. Abbott) and a former minister of finance, had stated that they believed it was necessary for any government to lend support to the price of government bonds and government securities. I was arguing that if the government found it necessary to support the price of its own securities, then there was even greater reason why it should maintain fair prices for agricultural products. I argued that food was just as important as government securities. One cannot wear or eat securities; but to live he must avail himself of the products of the farm. And those farm products are, in our economy, the one group of products which in my opinion govern the prosperity of a great many other sections of our country.

Any time there is a violent fluctuation in the prices of agricultural products, one finds unemployment, with a falling off of production of not only agricultural products but many other lines of goods.

The board to be set up under this measure is one means the government may use to prevent these fluctuations, if such board is used by the government for that purpose. I agree with the principle of the setting up of the board. But I am quite certain, from the actions of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner) in connection with our amendment, that he does not intend to use this board for the purpose of maintaining fair prices for agricultural products in this country.

One of the results of this will be that, while our economy may not plunge, it may gradually slide into a condition of insecurity. To bear out what I say I should like to place on record certain figures showing what has taken place in the United States, and to indicate what has happened there.

Mr. Gardiner: Mr. Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The decision has just been given that the matters now being discussed by the hon. member for Melfort do not refer

[Mr. Cardiff.]

to this measure at all, but refer to other measures. I suggest the hon. member for Melfort has no right to follow that line of discussion, and that if he persists he will be out of order in so doing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I must ask the hon. member to confine his remarks to the principle of the bill before us.

Mr. Wright: Yes. The principle of the bill is to set up a board which, under section 4 (1) (c), is to buy, sell or import agricultural products. How any board can buy, sell or import agricultural products without paying attention to prices is beyond me. I cannot understand why the Minister of Agriculture insists that this board shall not have anything to do with prices. I do not know what use it would be if it did not deal with prices.

Mr. Gardiner: To answer the question—

Mr. Wright: I did not ask a question. The minister can answer when he makes his speech.

Mr. Gardiner: On the point of order raised—

Mr. Knowles: No point of order was raised.

Mr. Gardiner: Before my first interruption the hon. member did say, "If the minister said that this bill has nothing to do with the fixing of prices"—and I am going to suggest to him that it has nothing to do with the fixing of prices, and there is nothing in the statement of its principle that indicates that it has. All it says is that if the government instructs this board to buy farm products, then it may buy them. But the government will state at the time the conditions under which it will buy.

Mr. Wright: Mr. Speaker, unless you rule otherwise, I intend to pursue the argument I was following; that is, the argument that if this board is set up it must quote prices when it buys and sells agricultural products. And in quoting those prices it does affect the economy of this country. I suggest that arguments in respect to that are in order under this bill.

As reported in the *Country Gentleman* for June, certain arguments were put forth in the United States as to what effect agricultural prices had on the economy of that country. Our economy in Canada is very closely related with that of the United States. The same factors which govern the rise and fall of prices over there govern the rise and fall of prices in this country. In that article it states that if there was to be a reasonable stability in the economy of the United States:

There is one requirement. The products of agriculture and our other raw materials must be priced at levels that will generate and maintain the income necessary for these conditions of prosperity.