

*Farm Prices*

That recommendation was made to the government and was considered by the government. 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 reestablished 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.

On December 2, 1943, the Prime Minister (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.

The bill which is based upon all of these statements is the bill which is now before the house, and I submit it to the house, Mr. Speaker, for second reading, with the suggestion that in the committee stage I shall be prepared to answer any questions I can that may be asked by different members of the committee.

Mr. E. E. PERLEY (Qu'Appelle): The minister has given us a lot of information and a very complete statement, so to speak. I wish we had had that statement on the resolution stage. It would have been much easier for us to make our few comments at this time if we had had the figures before us and an opportunity to review them.

The minister has referred to a period mentioned in the title of the bill, the transition period from war to peace. I was going to say that I was not satisfied with the provision with respect to that period because I think the bill should come into force at once. I feel that this board, having had the time to consider all these matters that have been mentioned this session, should be able to operate right away. As I see it, there are actually three periods, the period of the war, the transition period, and the peace-time period, and at the end of that period the section of the bill which brings it into force could contain a paragraph to terminate its operations when that period is over. The operations of this board should

[Mr. Gardiner.]

commence right away. This war, we regret to say, is not ended, and it will be some time before we reach the transition period.

The minister gave us comparisons of prices during the last war, at the end of the war and in the last year of the war, and then the periods following. The figures were all very interesting, but I would say that he is making a comparison with periods that are not comparable. In a great many respects this war is not at all comparable with the last war. It is not comparable with respect to marketing, and I do not think it will be comparable with the last war with respect to the transition period. Marketing conditions of this war have not so far been comparable with marketing conditions of the last war.

The minister gave us figures with respect to oats, barley and live stock. I am not going to deal with them now, because he read them quite rapidly and it was difficult to take them down as they were given. The barley figures were most interesting, and the wheat figures would have been interesting also, but the minister did not go into that question. But in making these comparisons between prices in 1918 and in 1930 I should like to know what the minister was trying to prove.

Mr. GARDINER: Would the hon. member like an answer now?

Mr. PERLEY: I should like to know also whether the minister will forecast what will happen in the twelve years following this war. He made a comparison between 1918 and 1930, a period of twelve years. What does he forecast will take place with respect to prices between the time this war ends and 1956? It would be interesting if the minister would tell us that.

Mr. GARDINER: I stated my reason when I gave the figures; it was in order to show that it would be impossible to have this bill run for a stated number of years, because the real drop in prices after the last war did not come until 1931. That was true not only in this country but in all other countries.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): What does that prove?

Mr. GARDINER: It proves that you cannot say this legislation should last for only three years or only five years. It must be left to the government of the day to determine how long it should be retained. We are not attempting to say now that this legislation will be retained for only three years or five years or any definite period. For the same reason I