

Agricultural Products Act

vincial marketing organizations, and cannot be discussed at this time.

Without in any way suggesting that the agricultural products marketing bill which will be before us is suitable in form, it is at least the recognition of a principle, that it is appropriate to deal with provincial marketing boards, which was put forward in the form of amendments in 1947 and 1948 by the Progressive Conservative members of this house. To the extent that this step is a recognition of their insistent demands for that democratic procedure, the members of the Progressive Conservative party welcome it in principle, although they reserve their right to discuss the details and the appropriateness of certain provisions when the measure is before the house for consideration.

This resolution calls for the renewal of an act which provides, under these wide-open terms, not only for the sale but for the acquisition by the government of foodstuffs of every kind, except wheat, for the purpose of carrying out such contracts.

Mr. Diefenbaker: With compulsion.

Mr. Drew: With compulsion on the part of the government, under directions issued by the government. Surely no more arbitrary power could be conferred on any government anywhere in the world than is conferred on this government by this particular act. By compulsion they can take over all foodstuffs under this act, except wheat, for the purpose of fulfilling contracts with countries other than Canada, under any terms that they see fit to make from time to time. No more dictatorial piece of legislation could be put before this house than the one now before us.

It is no answer to say that all that has been done under this act has been to make perfectly proper contracts with the United Kingdom for the sale of bacon, cheese and eggs. Let no one ask the question: Are you saying that we should not make these contracts?—because such a question in itself would suggest an attitude out of keeping with the responsibility of membership in this house. That is not the question. The question is whether an act as wide and as powerful as this should be passed at this time, if it ever should have been passed at all. There are contracts for the sale of commodities. Let this government introduce bills empowering it to deal with particular commodities and make contracts under terms defined by parliament itself. If a bill setting out that power in correct and parliamentary terms were put forward, I doubt if a single member of this house would oppose it.

Once again hon. members are being asked to declare a general emergency which in itself is a violation of every other constitutional

limitation, if it can in fact be supported. For that reason, and without extending the discussion in regard to the merits of the contracts, which are not in issue, or the methods of marketing, which are not in issue, or the desirability of selling foodstuffs under proper contracts to the United Kingdom or to any other country, it is our intention to call for a recorded vote against the declaration that a general emergency exists today of the kind that would have supported these emergency powers in wartime.

Hon. Stuart S. Garson (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, I rise with some diffidence to take part in this debate, because I am far from posing as an expert on the subject matter of this resolution. But I think it is desirable that a statement should be made in reply to the leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew), and as the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner) has exhausted his right to speak on this particular motion, I rise, as I admitted when I started, as a very poor substitute.

Mr. Knowles: The minister was not so humble a year ago.

Mr. Garson: My hon. friend's interjection has reference to Bill 82. I am hoping that when the discussion of that bill takes place the hon. member for Swift Current (Mr. Bentley) will repeat the arguments he made today. If he does I may have an opportunity to reply to them, because he was certainly out of order in discussing it today.

Mr. Coldwell: We will suggest that, and perhaps the Speaker will permit it.

Mr. Garson: I am going to speak to him privately and suggest that he do so, so that I may have a chance to reply.

This seems to be another measure to which our friends of the Progressive Conservative party are passionately giving their support, but against which they must vote for constitutional reasons. In connection with the extension of controls which I piloted through the house, they said many times—I hope I do justice to their arguments—that they objected to those general powers; that they wanted specific statutes set up dealing with each matter, one dealing with housing and I presume another with agriculture.

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Lockhart: Is this in order, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Garson: My hon. friends do not seem to like to be reminded of their arguments. The point I am coming to is that in this particular case we have followed precisely their advice. The subject matter of the bill which is now before the house was taken out of the general body of controls. In that respect we