

Hon. Mr. Roebuck: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. Crerar:—a direction in which we have now been travelling for several years.

Let us look at the definition of agricultural products, under section 2 of the bill. From a hasty glance, it would seem to embrace everything that could possibly be described as an agricultural product; but if anything has been overlooked—

Hon. Mr. Aseltine: Wheat?

Hon. Mr. Crerar:—the Governor in Council on the advice of the minister may designate it an agricultural product.

We come then to section 4, to which I would like to direct for a moment the attention of the house. This section contains the powers assigned to the board; and from very long experience I have found it wise to take a good close look at powers given in legislation presented to this house. If the provisions of the section mean anything, this section opens the door to state trading in all these agricultural products. I can recall the time, not very many years ago, when our socialist friends, known as the C.C.F. party, had as the main principle of their program state trading in agricultural and all other products. To this principle there was much opposition. We who call ourselves Liberals opposed it because Liberalism, if it means anything, stands for the freedom of the individual. Our Conservative friends also were opposed to it. The C.C.F. fought election after election on that issue and never once came within reasonable distance of achieving office.

Now we have in this bill, which is intended to be a permanent measure, the setting up of a state authority for the purposes of state trading. Sometimes I wonder whether we have all become socialists; whether the C.C.F. party, having had its policies rejected by the people, is by methods of this sort ensuring their adoption. This is a very grave question, because to my mind what is involved is a serious principle of policy. The board is empowered to sell or deliver agricultural products of any kind, under agreements made with other governments or, I assume, with private traders. It can purchase and negotiate contracts for the purchase of agricultural products. I suppose this means that if the government in its wisdom considers that the price of some agricultural product in Canada is reaching too high a level, it can check the movement by entrusting this board with the responsibility of importing commodities to check the rise in prices. If it does not mean that, I do not know what it means. For instance, if the

price of butter were to rise to an unreasonable level, the board could, in pursuit of a policy euphoniously described as "stabilizing the market", buy butter from New Zealand or Australia. The same course could be adopted in respect of eggs or any of a number of other products which are mentioned in this bill; and in that respect the measure is all-embracing. But that is not all: the board may store and process products, and set up manufacturing establishments. At the moment I cannot foresee this board setting up a factory to manufacture, let us say, margarine, but the possibility cannot be disregarded.

Now, is this legislation necessary at this time? Recently we have been inclined to plume ourselves on the fact that we have been getting away from official rigidities and official regulations. Only the other day, the regulations as to dealing in foreign exchange were obliterated, so that merchants and other business men can now deal freely in foreign exchange and more intelligently plan their operations. But by this bill we seem to persist in this regulatory policy—to my mind a mistaken one—so far as agricultural products are concerned. For the life of me I cannot see the necessity for it. Are we ever to return to something like a free competitive market in agricultural products? We have seen the consequences—which to say the least, have been rather unfortunate—of state trading in wheat. On a previous occasion this house was asked to pass an estimate of \$65 million to reimburse the farmers in a measure, for the fruits produced by a wholly mistaken policy. Are we going to get away from that sort of thing, or are we going to move further along the same road? That, so far as I am concerned, is a question posed by this legislation, and I have no hesitation in saying that I am opposed to the principle and opposed to the bill.

Hon. Cyrille Vaillancourt: Honourable senators, it is not possible today to conduct the affairs of the world and the intercourse between its people precisely as in other days. I am for free enterprise, for liberty of trade and commerce and so on, but it is necessary to prepare for the world of tomorrow. We remember that in 1932 and 1933 the inhabitants of some countries were unable to get sufficient food to nourish themselves, while we in Canada were obliged to burn our surplus wheat, and in Brazil great quantities of coffee were destroyed.

The bill before us is not a socialist measure; it is to make us ready for the conditions which will confront us tomorrow. One is reminded that even now there is too much grain in the West, and yesterday we