

then that the idea would meet with universal approval. It would be presumptuous on my part to claim that it did meet with universal approval, but I can say that all those who wrote to me or spoke to me about it—and there were many who did—agreed entirely with the suggestions I made on that occasion. In any event, nobody expressed disagreement with the plan suggested, and for that reason I feel that it meets with practically universal approval on the part of our growers.

Before turning to what I feel should be done as regards the future, may I say a word as to what has happened since I spoke in the house on February 4. As hon. members know, shortly after that date the United Kingdom placed an order for a considerable quantity of table stock potatoes from Prince Edward Island, something which probably never happened before and is not likely to occur in the future. Then we received orders from Portugal and Brazil, which was also something unheard of as regards table stock potatoes. In the meantime it turned out that the United States found out to their sorrow that they were short of potatoes with which to fill orders they had accepted from European countries. We all know that early last winter the United States government destroyed considerable quantities of potatoes because, at that time, they had no hope of finding a market for them. But somehow or another they carried the dumping of potatoes too far in the state of Maine. This is the only reason why the price of potatoes rose around April 20. In other words, it was the blunder of the United States government which brought some measure of relief to our farmers recently and at the same time saved this government from the serious embarrassment of having to go into the potato business on May 1, pursuant to the order in council passed last October. In my opinion, this is nothing short of miraculous and it is not likely to happen another year.

The fact that the government was miraculously saved from serious embarrassment as a result of improvident action in the United States should not prevent us from facing the problem for the future as it should be faced. The wheat growers of the west have their Canadian Wheat Board Act which guarantees them a floor price for their product. There is an effective minimum or floor price for practically all farm products. Potatoes are the only exception. The result is that we are left to struggle with the implacable law of supply and demand, which is neither fair nor equitable in years such as 1946. We are also exposed to, and are often victims of, unfair competition in marketing.

In the winter of 1945, when I sat in the legislature of New Brunswick, I heard it said time and again that unfair marketing practices were being carried on in New Brunswick particularly as regards the marketing of seed potatoes in South and Central America. An order would come up and a certain price would be arrived at between the dealers. Then another dealer would underbid the former and get the order. It would appear that such unfortunate practices occurred again during the present crop year. It is commonly stated, and not denied, that on the Saint John river, as a result of such unfair competition, the farmers lost money to the tune of some \$35,000 in connection with the sale to Argentina last fall.

Mr. SINNOTT: That is peanuts.

Mr. MICHAUD: It may be peanuts to the hon. member for Springfield, but it is not peanuts to the average farmer in my constituency and it possibly is not peanuts to the average farmer in his own constituency. The farmers are again under the impression that something similar occurred recently in connection with the orders from Portugal. Whether there is any truth in the rumour or not is of no practical consequence now, because prices have gone up above anything that the farmers could possibly get on those orders from Portugal and Brazil.

I bring out those facts in order to illustrate the necessity of an effective marketing agency for our farmers. The farmers do ask for such an agency. In support of their request, may I quote from certain reports published in divers papers at the time of the farmers' convention or meeting here in Ottawa sometime around the end of February. The first one is from the *Ottawa Journal* of February 27, and reads in part as follows:

The meeting, called by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture requested the directors of the federation to place before the government a draft federal agricultural products marketing act to be dealt with at the present session of parliament.

And further down:

The proposed act would set up a dominion marketing board with control over distribution, quantity, quality, variety and maximum and minimum prices of regulated farm products in interprovincial and export markets.

And further down:

G. F. Perkin, Ontario government director of marketing, told the delegates "practically all" cash crops in his province were under marketing schemes, but many farmers felt the need of extending regulations to cover interprovincial and export trade.