

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, May 21, 1959

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

Third report of sessional committee on railways, air lines and shipping—Mr. Rowe.

INDIAN AFFAIRS—CONCURRENCE IN FIRST REPORT OF JOINT COMMITTEE

Mr. Noel Dorion (Bellechasse) presented the first report of the joint committee on Indian affairs and moved that the report be concurred in.

Motion agreed to on division.

AGRICULTURE

SOYBEANS—ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUPPORT PRICE FOR 1959 CROP

Hon. D. S. Harkness (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I wish to announce that the agricultural stabilization board has been authorized to provide a support price for soybeans at \$2.00 per bushel for No. 2 grade or better for the 1959 crop. This prescribed price is 87 per cent of the 10-year average price and 10 cents per bushel below the support price provided for the 1958 crop. All of the 1958 crop of soybeans has not yet been marketed, but it is estimated that the average market price will be considerably below \$2.00 per bushel and the agricultural stabilization board will therefore be liable for a substantial payment on the 1958 crop.

The United States have reduced their support level by 24 cents per bushel, from \$2.09 for the 1958 crop to \$1.85 for the 1959 crop, national farm average. The lower United States support price reflects the general market outlook for the coming year. While the support price for the 1959 soybean crop has been reduced by 10 cents per bushel below the 1958 level, it will provide a real measure of assistance and should stabilize returns for this crop at a satisfactory level, particularly when consideration is given to what the growers' position would be if no assistance were provided, in view of the general market outlook for 1959 and the substantial reduction in the United States support price.

Hon. Paul Martin (Essex East): I thank the Minister of Agriculture for so readily acceding to my request of yesterday that he should announce today the government's policy with

regard to a floor price on soybeans. I can only hope that other proposals I have made to the Minister of Agriculture will receive as quick attention as I made for a floor price on soybeans. I regret to say, however, that the announcement is one that will not be widely acclaimed by the soybean growers. I am afraid that this 10 per cent reduction in the floor price—

Mr. Harkness: It is not 10 per cent; it is 10 cents.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Ten cents—of course that is more than 10 per cent.

Mr. Harkness: No, it is less than 5 per cent.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I should like to say this to my hon. friend. Today, but only for today, his mathematics may be better than mine, but I may say to him that his appreciation of the plight of the farmers obviously is not as good as mine. This reduction represents, I think, as others have indicated in this house, a gradual withdrawal by the government, from its announced policy of supporting certain agricultural products by way of support prices.

Mr. Harkness: It is nothing of the kind.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): My hon. friend says "It is nothing of the kind", but bit by bit, day by day, the government's policy of price supports is being abridged and the farmers are receiving less and less assistance. The minister will recall that when we discussed this matter some time ago—

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): —I indicated to him that there had been a cut in the floor price on soybeans in the United States and that I would hope the action taken there would not be the kind of action—

Hon. E. D. Fulton (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order I raise for Your Honour's consideration the question which has been raised before, namely whether by way of comment upon a statement announcing the government's decision in a certain case hon. gentlemen opposite are allowed to cover the whole field, as the hon. member is doing today.

Some hon. Members: Order.

Some hon. Members: Closure.

Mr. Chevrier: There is no point of order.