

Agricultural Prices Support Act

Then I said that in setting floor prices we went back over those figures and had them checked. Then we compared them with the prices that the farmers were paying for the same list of products now, and what they were getting for their products under the floors. Well, that was the first answer. Then Mr. Hope asked Mr. Galbraith which period would give the farmer the better return if it were taken as a basis for what was called parity, the period of 1943-45, or the period 1926-29, or the period 1909-14, which is the period used by the United States. Mr. Galbraith said he did not have the figures for 1943-45, but he did have the figures for 1943-48, and he said the best period in the United States was that period. He said the second best period was from 1926 to 1929, and the third best was from 1909 to 1914. If I remember correctly, he said that the highest one was about 15 per cent better than the other one. While he did not have the exact figures on the centre period, he thought it might be somewhere around 10 or a little lower, better than the period 1909-14.

The next day I was asked this question again in the open meeting, and I gave the answer that I have just given. Mr. Hope stood up in the meeting—I am sure that if he were here tonight he would tell you what I am going to tell you now—and said, "When I asked the question last night and got the answer I did from Mr. Galbraith, I was a little surprised; so I went right up to my room and took those figures." For the benefit of the members of this house, I might say that up until last year Mr. Hope was the economic adviser to the Conservative party on agricultural matters. He is now economic adviser to the farm federation. Mr. Hope said he went up to his room, took the figures which he had, checked up on what had been said, and applied it to Canada. He said, "I must say that the last period is still the better in Canada." He did not say how much better, but he said it was better in Canada. In other words, our base is the highest price.

What I want to say, in reply to the question that has been asked, is that we have checked the floors we have put in. A Mr. MacInnis, the gentleman who has been going around Ontario making speeches about hogs, got up in the meeting and said, "Can you give me those figures?" I told him I could not give him those figures now because I did not have them with me. I checked them before I agreed to the 32½ cents, and before I agreed to the figure that is being paid by all concerned. I said, "All I can tell you at the moment is that the price which was agreed to is highest." Well, I have

[Mr. Gardiner.]

sent him the figures since, and speaking from memory—I can give the correct figures later if it is necessary—it works out to 24 cents and a fraction for hogs that are now selling in Toronto at 27 cents and a fraction. You will find if you go over the others that there is not very much difference in the others as compared with that. In other words, we have not written a formula into the act; we are trying to use common sense in working out the figures. We think they are quite satisfactory.

Mr. Wright: I take it from the minister's reply that the period 1943-45 will be used in determining—or is it 1943-48?

Mr. Gardiner: The period we have been checking on is 1943, 1944 and 1945. We will continue to check on it. I do not say, neither do they in the United States, that when that has been worked out we are going to pay a 100 per cent floor price based on it. In the United States, they do not pay anything higher than 90 per cent, and most of the time they are paying 60 per cent. What I did say in Niagara Falls, and what I have said everywhere, is that, when we brought in this legislation, no farmer in Canada, no one anywhere, expected that we would set floor prices at the highest price level we would ever obtain for farm products. That is the price we obtained in 1949, the highest price we ever obtained.

The only criticism that has been made of what we have done is that we should have put the floor at the peak. We did not undertake to do that.

Mr. Wright: It is quite evident from what the minister has stated now that, so far as the government is concerned, it is not going to give a guarantee at all. It is only going to figure out the 1943-45 price and decide on each product as it comes up, whether to set the floor prices at 70 per cent of parity, 90 per cent, or 25 per cent.

Mr. Gardiner: The people learned a long time ago, and have demonstrated it quite a few times in recent elections, that the security of having a Liberal government in power giving them these undertakings is sufficient.

Mr. Charlton: Has the minister compared the prices in Canada for 1943-45 with the figures for the United States for the same years?

Mr. Gardiner: I do not think I have them here for the same years, but I think my hon. friend knows Mr. Galbraith. He is a native of Ontario, and has held prominent positions in the United States department of agriculture, as well as in United States universities. He has figured out prices for the United States, but has spent a considerable part of