

Agricultural Products Board

perishable, have they any assurance that the government will then provide for storage or for the processing of that commodity so it can be kept over until such time as it may be made available to a nation that needs it?

The minister may say that the United States did a good deal of that sort of thing last year, and that some of the products that were processed deteriorated on their hands. That is true; but the United States did not make those commodities available to many nations that would have taken them, provided ways and means had been worked out to make the transfer. Last year FAO faced that problem. A special committee was set up to find ways and means of making this surplus available to nations that required it, and it proposed an international commodity clearing house. Canada voted against that proposal. If I remember rightly the Minister of Agriculture was one of the delegates who voted against that proposal; and one of the reasons he gave was that there in that proposal nothing that could not be carried out by Canada on her own as an individual nation. So we come back to the question: in the event of any surplus occurring, is Canada prepared to find ways and means of getting that surplus food to the nations that require it, even though we have not the type of exchange we want in return? Again I come down to the point: is the government today asking the farmers of this country to expand their production to the highest level possible with the guarantee that if they do so they will not be penalized by having surplus goods left on their hands?

Mr. Gardiner: Mr. Chairman, I do not know that I would speak on the question were it not for the fact that at least two or three members have made much the same statement just made by the hon. member for Acadia. The fact is that from the time FAO was first set up the government of Canada supported Sir John Orr in his proposal, which was along the lines of the suggestion which has been made by the hon. member for Acadia and others. I believe that on two occasions, probably three, I was the representative of this country and the government's position was clearly stated as being favourable to Sir John Orr's proposal. Then there was the Washington meeting to which reference has been made. I have not given the answer at any time that Canada could do the job as well herself.

The statement I did make had to do with wheat, and it was to the effect that Canada had carried 600 million bushels of wheat throughout the last half of the war, and not at the cost of Canada but at the cost of the

[Mr. Quelch.]

wheat grower. My statement was that if 200,000 farmers in Canada could carry 600 million bushels of wheat, surely a group of nations could carry the comparatively small amount which they would be required to carry in order to take care of the surpluses that might occur elsewhere. It was that argument that we advanced. In the face of that argument the countries that were most capable of financing any such proposition refused to do so. All Canada ever did in the matter was to say that it would be an impossible position for Canada to head a group of nations who would find it impossible to finance such a proposition, so Canada could not vote for something she could not possibly carry out. Canada voted against that. We still maintain that if all the countries of the world, and particularly those most capable of financing, wish to follow such a plan, then Canada would be in a position to consider the matter again and express her point of view with regard to it. But so long as the situation is that those who might be expected to do the greater part of the financing are opposed to it, Canada certainly is not going to step in and try to finance alone the feeding, let us say, of the suffering people in China. That is all that has been said. The position Canada has taken from time to time has made that quite clear.

We are saying to the farmers of Canada, go ahead and produce for the markets that are available. The farmers are doing that rather successfully, and they are getting a fair return for what they produce.

Mr. Wright: I am very pleased indeed to have that statement about Canada's position, because I am afraid the minister's position with regard to the Washington meetings has been misinterpreted.

Mr. Gardiner: My statements have always been misinterpreted by certain people.

Mr. Knowles: Whose fault is that?

Mr. Wright: Whose fault is that? If the minister reads his own speech he will find it is not very clear.

Mr. Harkness: The minister often misinterprets himself.

Mr. Wright: The minister has made a statement in this house that in the setting of floor prices—if the minister would talk to me instead of someone else—

Mr. Gardiner: I have heard what you have to say so often that I know what you are going to say.

An hon. Member: The minister made a statement in Regina.

Mr. Wright: He says too much where he should not say it, and not enough where he