

*Agricultural Prices Support Act*

that we as a party do not believe it is necessary to take further time of the house at this stage, until we see what the bill contains.

**Mr. H. R. Argue (Assiniboia):** Mr. Speaker, I, too, welcome the introduction of this legislation, which foreshadows the placing of the Agricultural Prices Support Act, 1944, on a permanent basis. I had hoped the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner), in his introductory remarks, would give us something new, something more specific as to what might be done under this act in the years that are ahead. Instead, he read the speech he made in introducing this legislation in 1944. I think the farmers of Canada, while they welcomed the bill in 1944, and while they welcome the placing of this act on a permanent basis in 1950, do not feel that the government has given any real stability to farm income under this act.

I might point out for example, what happened within the last week of August last year, while this measure was in force. The price of hogs at Winnipeg was \$31.85 per hundredweight for grade B-1. At the end of December a similar hog was selling for only \$26.10 per hundredweight. A drop of \$5.75 per hundredweight for hogs within a period of a few months, with this act on the statute book, is certainly not giving farm income any real degree of stability. While this act was in effect, and while the Agricultural Products Act was in effect, the act which will be continued for another year, we find that the packers were not playing the game, either with the Canadian producer or with the British consumer.

For example, in the year 1949 there was shipped a total of 65 million pounds of bacon to Britain. In the first ten months of 1949 we shipped to Britain approximately 33,800,000 pounds of bacon. In the last two months of the year we shipped over 31 million pounds. In other words the packers of this country held bacon in storage until near the end of the year when they learned the new contract price, and then in the last two months of the year unloaded as much bacon on the British market as they had delivered in the first ten months of the year. That is not stabilizing the bacon market, nor is it providing bacon, month in and month out, for the British people. The British do not want to go hungry for bacon for ten months and then have a feast in the last two months of the year, merely because the packers can make a lot more money by conducting their business in that way.

To further substantiate what I have said with reference to the fact that the farmers have not been satisfied with what has been done under this act, I might point to the

drastic drop that took place in egg prices last December and January. After December 17, eggs were not bought for the British market, but it was not until January 27 that the government announced it was placing a floor price under eggs. It was not until the farmers across this country had held one protest meeting after another that the Minister of Agriculture finally used the act which he said in 1944 would be used to provide stability in the transition period. I might quote from memory a sentence in a speech of the minister last January in which he said price support for eggs was necessary because at Dauphin, Manitoba, for example, prices for eggs had dropped to as low as eighteen cents a dozen. In the first part of December the farmers received at least fifty cents a dozen, and some of them a good deal more; the government waited until January, waited until a great many producers were getting as little as eighteen cents before any steps were taken to provide a floor under egg prices. I should like to say to the minister that it is all very well for him to read the speech he made in 1944, in introducing this bill; but if the government does not do more in the next five years than it did in the last five years under this bill, the farmers will be thoroughly and justly dissatisfied.

Under the act \$200 million can be used by the government from time to time to provide support for agricultural prices. I think it is not good enough that the minister have \$200 million with which he can support agricultural prices at any price he may choose. We know that the floor price of butter today is 58½ cents a pound; we do not know how low the minister will allow the price to go. While there is under hogs today a floor of \$32.50 a hundredweight, we do not know what the floor will be next year. The farmer certainly has no way of knowing from one year to the next what floor prices, if any, will be established. I therefore believe that the government and the minister should write into this act a parity formula whereby the agricultural producers of this country will be guaranteed, under the statutes of the nation, a price that will not go below a certain figure based on that formula. It is not good enough to say now that eggs shall be supported at 36 cents and 38 cents a dozen when we do not know what support, if any, will be under eggs next year. In my opinion it is not good enough to support egg prices to the packers as the government is doing, and not to the producer and to support bacon prices to the packers and not to the producers. As I pointed out earlier we saw the packers holding off the sale of bacon they had in cold storage until such time as they themselves could make the greatest profit.