

As a shipper of potatoes to the West Indies, I bought them at 25 cents a bag, or a bushel and a half of potatoes packed in the bag by the farmer after he had garnered them. Placed on the cars, they were sold at 25 cents a bag, and this was the result of action by the Minister of Agriculture and the government in establishing this foolish and stupid marketing board.

An hon. MEMBER: What is the bag worth?

Mr. DUFF: About 7 cents, and the man's labour about 10 cents, and the farmer got 8 cents.

An hon. MEMBER: That is 8 cents more than they got in Ontario.

Mr. DUFF: So much the worse for Ontario. When I came in at five past eight the minister was boasting about what a great thing the marketing board had proved to be. Let me tell you how stupid this whole marketing situation has turned out to be so far as potatoes are concerned. The former chairman of the marketing board, Doctor Barton, had sense enough to resign; he would not stand for it and he got out. What happened? When the marketing board or the minister or someone else discovered that the poor farmer in Prince Edward Island was receiving only 8 cents per bushel they started to create an organization as a camouflage to fool the public among the buyers of potatoes, and they said, "You must sell potatoes at a certain price and not lower," and they fixed the price in Halifax, for instance—that is the place I am interested in—at 58 cents a bag, and they appointed a man there to walk around every morning, calling on wholesale potato dealers and instructing them not to sell the potatoes unless they got 58 cents a bag. The result was they could not sell very many. Time went on, spring came and the potatoes began to sprout, and those who were dealing in potatoes said, "Here, we have five or ten or fifteen thousand bags of potatoes and because of this act we cannot get clear of them. We are willing to lose money on them so as to clean up the whole thing." But this man—if I remember rightly his name was Grant—walked around every morning, drawing his five or ten dollars a day, and insisting upon it that the dealers should get 58 cents a bag or let the potatoes sprout. But that was not good enough. One day my partner sold fifteen hundred bags of these potatoes in different islands of the West Indies. He did not sell them f.o.b. Halifax because the West Indies would not buy them that way; they wanted them c.i.f. West Indies. We got all the papers ready, invoices and everything else,

[Mr. Duff.]

and instead of 58 cents we sold them at 98 cents; and this official of my hon. friend went around to the offices of the different shippers and demanded to see their invoices, which of course showed 98 cents and not 58 cents. This man then told them they could not ship their potatoes at the 98 cent price, but the shippers informed him that the potatoes had already been shipped. They said, "The potatoes have gone; these are only the invoices; the potatoes left by the Lady Nelson, which sailed this morning at twelve o'clock when you were in bed drawing your five or ten dollars per day from the board." He said they must change their invoices or he would get into trouble if they shipped the potatoes at 98 instead of 58 cents. The shippers told him that the potatoes were sold c.i.f. Trinidad or Barbados or Santiago or Cuba or whatever it was. He said, "I don't know about that; I got instructions that it must be 58 cents a bag." Whether they communicated with the minister I do not know—I am not sure whether the minister knows what c.i.f. or f.o.b. means. At any rate the whole thing is a tragedy. Imagine the minister sending this man around in this way to men who have been in business forty years. The farmers of Prince Edward Island and the farmers of Carleton county, New Brunswick, would have sold twice as many potatoes as they did if the minister and the Tory government and the board had not interfered. The fact is, however, that owing to this organization which the minister created to save his face and the face of the government, there are millions of bushels of potatoes in the cellars of the farmers of Prince Edward Island and Carleton county, New Brunswick, though they might have been able to sell those potatoes long ago. You remember what Barnum said—you can fool the people some of the time—and the joke is that the potato growers fooled the minister, because those who had potatoes to sell, realizing that they had to get clear of them in spite of the pegged price which the minister and his board fixed, got ahead of him.

An hon. MEMBER: Did they bootleg them?

Mr. DUFF: Yes, exactly. After all, the people who grew the potatoes should have had the first chance to sell them and should have been allowed to sell them at their own price even if they lost money, and as a matter of fact they were too cute for the minister and the board—I will not tell the minister how; he does not know and I will not tell him. But let me assure him that hundreds of thousand of bushels were sold in spite of the