

Agricultural Prices Support Act

I just place that on the record, Mr. Speaker, because I find a great deal of misunderstanding of the actual position of the poultry producer on the part of many consumers in the city areas.

I should like to say a word or two in connection with price support for the products of the dairy producers. There is in my constituency a mixed farming, lumbering and mining development. There are a number of small farmers, who do a certain amount of dairying under somewhat more difficult conditions than those which prevail on the larger farms. Many of these farmers depend for their living on the cream they ship to the creameries, so the price of butter is of very serious import to them. There again, the freight costs, feed costs and other costs, particularly in the district I represent, are mounting. I am sure that those producers welcome the price support program for butter, and I urge continued support at a satisfactory level.

I rise this evening, Mr. Speaker, particularly to say a few words about the position of the tree fruit industry in British Columbia. In dealing with this question, I am not only speaking as a member of this house, but I am speaking as a grower of some 40 years' experience. While I am only a small producer, I have been a member of the British Columbia fruit growers association for all that time; 35 years as a member of various co-operatives, and at present I am vice-president of the Kootenay storage co-operative. When I speak on this subject, I represent a number of small growers, who have carved their farms out of the forest as a result of great toil and labour, and in many cases a considerable expenditure of capital. These people as a whole are hard-working and frugal in their way of life. If any people deserve some support or some assistance, they do. When I speak about them, Mr. Speaker, in my mind's eye I can see them now, pruning and spraying; making preparations for this year's crop.

I believe this government's marketing policies have seriously affected the position of the fruit growers. The general retreat of the government from the commodity board principle is one that is regretted by the fruit growers in my constituency. The failure to support the principle of marketing surpluses, advocated by the international commodity clearing house, is equally regretted by the fruit growers of the constituency I have the honour to represent. I urge upon the government, Mr. Speaker, careful consideration of the proposals that have been advanced by the C.C.F. members of this house. Throughout the country I find that these ideas are gaining the support of many people. First of all, I do ask the government to explore further the possibilities of selling some of our agricultural

surpluses for sterling, which sterling could be re-invested in undeveloped areas. I find there is considerable support in responsible quarters for that proposal. I do ask the government to investigate the possibilities in this direction.

Now, Mr. Speaker, a continuation of the present policies so far as marketing in the international sphere is concerned will result in more agricultural surpluses, and poverty and want at home and abroad. I want to bring one other suggestion in this respect to the attention of the minister. I understand that about \$400 million are used annually at this time for the purchase of Canadian wheat by the government of Britain. The government made some arrangements for deferring the purchase of a certain amount of wheat, in order to make it possible for the British to buy a certain amount of cheese and bacon. I should like to suggest to the minister that, since \$400 million are to be expended on wheat, and an arrangement was made for the suspension of some of that in order for the British to buy cheese and bacon, surely if the matter had been taken up with the British they would have been willing to arrange that four or five million dollars be used for the purchase of fruit. An important consideration in this matter is that you can keep wheat from year to year, but you cannot keep fruit. I think if the minister had made some arrangement such as that it would have been of great assistance to the fruit growing industry, of great assistance to the British, and to this government.

Before sitting down, I should like to deal with the loss of the British preference, because I believe the easy way in which our government gave up the British preference, upon the recommendations of its officials, indicates that the government did not examine the future possibilities as it should have done. When the British preference was given up, I stated in this house in 1948 that I was quite sure the government officials were wrong when they said there was no future in the British market for apples. On that point, I should like to quote from the record of the 1948 committee on banking and commerce. The matter was of some concern to the British Columbia members representing constituencies in which fruit is grown. I should like to quote briefly from page 234 of this committee report. The member for Kamloops (Mr. Fulton) is questioning Mr. MacKinnon of the Department of Trade and Commerce. It reads as follows:

Mr. Fulton: This would probably be the time to ask you about the loss of the preference on apples. I have studied very carefully, Mr. MacKinnon, the statement which you made to the Senate committee on trade relations and particularly the passages at page 43 where several senators were asking you

[Mr. Herridge.]