

Agricultural Prices Support Act

except for about three basic products, wheat, cheese and some bacon. We may lose the market for cheese and bacon in another year if, as I stated, the United States is prepared to make ECA dollars available to western Europe and other countries, with which to purchase surplus food supplies in the United States. Having lost these markets, the minister is seeking to renew this Agricultural Products Act for one year. The purpose of that must be simply to finish out the present British contract which we have, and then allow the farmers themselves or the producer boards, under the Agricultural Products Marketing Act which was introduced last year, to try to win back those markets in Great Britain. I do not think that is good enough. I think this Agricultural Products Act, which we are renewing today for one year, should have been made a permanent piece of legislation. Under it, this government could set up export boards to export our surplus agricultural products.

I am quite convinced that no producer boards, set up under the Agricultural Products Marketing Act, are going to be able to win back those markets. Look at what they are up against. In the first place, they have no control over our exchange. They have no control over tariffs on goods coming into this country. They have no control over the availability of dollars. It is only the government that has those controls and can win back those markets in Great Britain.

In the Agricultural Products Marketing Act, which was passed last year, and which will give the producer boards the power to go into the export market, clause 2 provides:

The governor in council may by order grant authority to any board or agency authorized under the law of any province to exercise powers of regulation in relation to the marketing of any agricultural product locally within the province, to regulate the marketing of such agricultural product outside the province in interprovincial and export trade and for such purposes to exercise all or any powers like the powers exercisable by such board or agency in relation to the marketing of such agricultural product locally within the province.

Then clause 3 reads as follows:

The governor in council may make regulations prescribing the terms and conditions governing the granting and revocation of authority under section 2 and generally may make regulations for carrying the purposes and provisions of this act into effect.

Now, I should like to ask the Minister of Agriculture what regulations there are under this act. I think he should tell us what the regulations are under the Agricultural Products Marketing Act, so the provinces or producer boards which are set up will know what specifications or regulations they have to meet. Until that is known, it is going

[Mr. Wright.]

to be rather difficult for any group of farmers to set up a board to market their products, or to go into the export market.

Mr. Gardiner: That was discussed fully at the meeting the day before yesterday with the provinces and the federation.

Mr. Wright: Did the minister tell the people who were gathered there what the regulations were under this act?

Mr. Gardiner: I said there were not any.

Mr. Wright: That is just what I expected, there are not any. As a matter of fact, it is just a blank act which means nothing until the regulations are passed.

Mr. Gardiner: The model act was presented to us by the federation of agriculture. I assume that the section which is being quoted is in the act for the same reason as it is in many other acts having to do with the Department of Agriculture. This house would not give me, as minister, the authority. I was told I had to get the authority from council to do those things.

Mr. Wright: When I look over and see the members of council on the government side today, there are about 9 lawyers and there is one—I do not know whether you would call him a farmer—whose occupation, one among many, is that of a farmer. He was a school teacher and then a farmer, but he is the only man in the cabinet who understands the agricultural situation. I suppose the cabinet will naturally have to take his advice when they are passing regulations under this act.

Mr. Gardiner: The opposition have always said that they did not want to give me that authority. They have said that I should have the authority with the other 20 men in the cabinet, and I agree with them.

Mr. Wright: According to the statute, the minister has taken it.

Mr. Gardiner: No, I have not.

Mr. Wright: Yes, the minister has. He is the only member of the cabinet who knows the agricultural situation across the dominion. I do not see how the cabinet could do other than accept his recommendation concerning the regulations under this act. I do not think that is good enough. What agriculture wants at this time is something permanent; something which will enable the farmers to know what the situation is. There should be some act under which the farmers could make long-term agreements to take care of our surplus agricultural products. There should be some forward pricing system in this country, by means of which the farmers would have some idea of approximately what they