

Agricultural Products Board

We hear continuously of the great importance of the production of steel, of the production of iron ore and of the production of oil. But there is an inclination, even amongst some members of this house and a number of people in the country, to overlook the fact that all the other production in Canada depends upon the production of food. It is for that reason, Mr. Speaker, that we in this group and the members representing farm constituencies believe this is a most important measure. It is important not only because food is the foundation for all other production in this country, but because a great many of us believe that food is one of the great armaments in the efforts to build peace in the world today. It is taken for granted that business will try to get a fair profit. We hear repeatedly of the percentage of profit to which a manufacturer is entitled, or a wholesaler or a retailer. The workers organize to obtain a satisfactory wage agreement, and rightly so. The one group in the country upon whom all other activities depend is the group producing food, and the members of that group have to live a life that is, to a great extent, a gamble. Their life is dependent upon crop diseases, variable weather, markets and prices. Because we recognize this bill is a step towards building up orderly marketing in this country, and we hope it will do something to provide more economic security for the farmers, we in this group intend to support it.

May I call it one o'clock, Mr. Speaker?

At one o'clock the house took recess.

The house resumed at 2.30 p.m.

Mr. Herridge: Mr. Speaker, I trust the house will be patient with me for a few minutes while I make a few further observations on this bill. I should like to draw the attention of the house to the fact that to the best of my knowledge I am the only British Columbian who has spoken on this bill. I think British Columbia's interests are entitled to some representation here, particularly from our point of view.

When I was concluding my remarks at the time we recessed for lunch I said that we in this group support the principle of this bill. We do that because we believe the bill does offer an opportunity to introduce greater stability and security into agriculture. We believe that if that stability and security are to be obtained this bill must be linked effectively and used effectively with the prices support act. If that is done we believe there will be some confidence established in the

[Mr. Herridge.]

future for farmers and for farmers' sons, and we might do something to arrest the very dangerous drift from the farming districts of the country to the industrial section. That drift, Mr. Speaker, is occurring right in my own constituency. Many of the younger men are going into industry because they see no future for agriculture, and many of the farms are being operated by older men.

The British Columbia fruit growers association received notice that they were to obtain a grant of \$1,200,000 to assist them in connection with apple costs for the past year. The British Columbia fruit growers association is very pleased to receive that assistance, and are making arrangements at the present time to borrow money from the banks and distribute it to the growers, pending the receipt of the money from the government. But with all that, there is a great feeling of uncertainty in the fruit and vegetable industry in the southern sections of British Columbia. The fruit growers, the vegetable growers, the fruit growers organizations and the vegetable growers organizations have written to me and expressed their serious concern for the future in that respect. Our British Columbia fruit growers association is a most efficient organization and keeps its growers well informed of the situation concerning marketing from week to week. Quite recently they published a special bulletin dealing with the government assistance on the 1950 apple crop. In that bulletin they published a letter written by the minister to the president of the British Columbia fruit association, having regard to this \$1,200,000 assistance, and made some other comments. These are the two comments that concern the fruit growers of British Columbia. I am going to read just one short paragraph of the minister's letter. The minister said, in part:

The government has decided, therefore, that after this grant of \$1,200,000 no further assistance can be provided to the apple growers of British Columbia with respect to difficulties that have arisen and adjustments that have been necessary within the industry since the war.

At the conclusion of the minister's letter they go on to comment:

It will be noted that no mention has been made of the Agricultural Prices Support Act. This grant was not made under the act but is a special grant from the government. It is a fact that apples have not been officially accepted under the terms of the prices support act.

What is causing uncertainty is the fact that the minister has said that in future they will receive no further assistance by way of grants, and to date apples have not been brought under the prices support act.

In passing I want to indicate to the minister and to the house how careful our organization is in the distribution of government grants.