

Supply—Agriculture

ucts will be. I agree with the hon. member for Souris that there are misgivings in the minds of many people engaged in agriculture as to what we did last year when we introduced an act to establish floor prices under agricultural products in the transitional period from war to peace. We provided \$200 million in that act to be used as a stabilization fund. We appointed a board with the Hon. Mr. Taggart as chairman. He is also chairman of the meat board of Canada. I believe there were also two government officials. That board has been in existence for a year. Surely by now they must have something definite with respect to whether floor prices are to be established under agricultural products and at what levels.

I should like the minister to state whether present floor prices under oats and barley will be the floor prices which are to be established by this board. At the present time the floor price under oats is $45\frac{1}{2}$ cents and the ceiling $51\frac{1}{2}$ cents, plus 10 cents equalization payment, which brings the price of oats to $61\frac{1}{2}$ cents a bushel. If the present floor price is to remain it means that oats, for instance, can drop 25 per cent when in surplus production. In the case of barley, the present floor price is 60 cents and the ceiling $64\frac{1}{2}$, plus 20 cents equalization payment, making $84\frac{1}{2}$ cents. The difference between $84\frac{1}{2}$ and 60 cents of a floor is twenty-eight per cent of a drop which might take place in barley under the present system.

Take wheat. The same thing applies. Our present price for wheat is \$1.55 on the export market and \$1.25 for what is sold in Canada, with a floor—I am going to use the word "floor" because that is what it amounts to—of \$1 a bushel under wheat until 1950. This again represents a twenty-five per cent reduction from present wheat prices.

If we take butter the same thing applies. The present floor price under butter is from thirty to thirty-five cents a pound, depending on the season of the year and the region in which the price applies. There is also a subsidy of from ten to twelve cents, which means that the present price being received by the producer is from forty to forty-five cents, again depending on the region or the season. If the present floor price of thirty to thirty-five cents is to remain that again means a drop of approximately twenty-five per cent in the income which agriculture will receive.

It is time that the minister made some definite statement with regard to agriculture as to just where it is the intention of the government to fix these floor prices. Until that is done there will be a tremendous amount of speculation and a tremendous amount of dissatisfaction, and we are not going to keep

up our agricultural production in these circumstances. Production in agricultural products is kept up when the farmer knows what he will receive for his products over a period of years. Every good farmer knows that you cannot plan just for one year or two years. You have to rotate your crops; you have to plan whether you intend to build up a dairy herd or a beef herd, whether you are going into pigs or poultry over a period of years, not for one year or from one year to another.

I said that I do not believe there is a better time than now for the government to lay down some long-term programme for agriculture in this country. Our chief market for agricultural products has always been Great Britain. In Great Britain the government have stated that it is their intention to take the purchase of food for Great Britain out of the speculative market. They have stated that it is their intention to enter into contracts with exporting nations for their food requirements. I am sure that they would be prepared to enter into longer term contracts for their food requirements than just from one year to another, provided that we are prepared to meet them in that respect. I believe that the government should take definite steps at this time to obtain some long-term contracts for our agricultural products.

Another matter which I think the government should take into consideration with respect to the export of our agricultural products is the making of them available in Great Britain under conditions which are at least similar to those under which other countries make their agricultural products available there. I have particular reference to cheese. It is my understanding that in Great Britain, New Zealand, which is our chief competitor in the cheese-market there, has cold storage establishments for cheese which makes New Zealand cheese available to the British market at all times, while we in Canada allow British buyers to come to this country and buy our cheese here. I believe that the government would be well advised to establish cold storage facilities in Great Britain for Canadian dairy products and see that they are available to the British buying public at all times, and that a suitable product is available there in good condition.

So far as food products are concerned, one of the chief requirements of the British people is continuity of supply. They will deal only with countries when they are assured of that continuity, and we in Canada should try in every way to meet their requirements in that respect.

[Mr. Wright.]