

FRUIT MARKING

On the orders of the day:

Mr. W. A. FRASER (Northumberland): I should like to ask the Minister of Agriculture whether he contemplates introducing legislation this session for the revision of the act relating to fruit marking.

Hon. ROBERT WEIR (Minister of Agriculture): The matter is under consideration.

THE BUDGET

CONTINUATION OF DEBATE ON THE ANNUAL
FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE MINISTER
OF FINANCE

The house resumed from Friday, March 24, consideration of the motion of Hon. E. N. Rhodes (Minister of Finance) that Mr. Speaker do now leave the chair for the house to go into committee of ways and means, and the amendment thereto of Mr. Ralston.

Hon. H. H. STEVENS (Minister of Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, another year in the fiscal history of this country has come and gone, and perhaps what is even more important is that another year of this period of intense economic and commercial depression is past and gone. As we look back over the past year and, indeed, over the past three or four years, many of us are willing to admit that we are much wiser to-day than we were three or four years ago. Many proposals made with great confidence that some suggestion, if accepted, would cure all the ills from which we were suffering, we now realize were mistaken ideas.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

Mr. STEVENS: My hon. friends opposite seem to think that the monopoly of that rests with this side of the house, but I have very definitely in mind innumerable weird suggestions that have come from the other side.

The year, however, has passed. Under our constitutional form of government, we are once again confronted with the responsibility on the part of the administration of accounting for the year's stewardship and of intimating to the house provision for the future. This was done by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Rhodes) in the admirable and well presented speech which he delivered the other day. Our picture at this time may not be particularly rosy, but as a people, one nation

[Mr. Duranleau.]

among many, I think we as Canadians can claim the right of looking back over the past year with at least some degree of satisfaction, even if it be grim, and of looking to the future with a great deal of confidence.

The hon. member for Shelburne-Yarmouth (Mr. Ralston) who, I regret very much to note, is not in his seat, because I purpose dealing and necessarily must deal with much of what he said the other day, definitely represented the official opposition and the Liberal party as a whole. I believe his utterances were fully endorsed and unreservedly accepted by them. Therefore I feel at liberty to say that his views represent those of the Liberal party, the official opposition in this house. The hon. gentleman in his references to the government was certainly not very complimentary. In one breath he described the government as being weak and without self-reliance and a moment or two later, when it suited his argument, he said that this was a domineering government. Then he said that it was a static and fear-stricken government. A little later he said that it was an arrogant government. So we have this weak, domineering, fear-stricken, arrogant government accounting to the house for the last year's affairs. But there was no word of encouragement from the hon. gentleman from one end of his speech to the other; there was no recognition of world difficulties and perplexities; there was no offer of cooperation, only bitter denunciation, a deliberate disregard of obvious difficulties and, I believe, as I shall show in a moment, a gross misinterpretation of public statistics.

I propose to demonstrate to the house that his picture of Canadian trade is a false one and that his analysis of our debt and proposed new taxes is a distortion of easily understandable and readily knowable facts. First, I shall take his reference to the public debt. He said that the increase in the public debt was \$455,000,000. In making that statement he ignores the transfer from current to funded debt of \$33,293,000 of school land funds. This leaves the increase in the debt at about \$421,000,000. This is his first error. The matter, however, of interest is not an error of a few millions here and there, but whether the items entering into this increase justify it, having in mind of course the conditions under which this country in common with all others is labouring. I stated that