

Agricultural Prices Support Act

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but I do not see how these remarks are directly related to the resolution. The house seems to be greatly interested in them and in the subject, but if I allow the hon. member to continue further I shall have to allow other hon. members to do the same. Therefore I suggest to him that he might revert to the resolution.

Mr. Coldwell: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to transgress the rules of the house. Perhaps I was more or less inspired to get a little bit outside them by one or two interruptions. We are however dealing with two resolutions, a resolution to amend the Agricultural Products Act by extending its operation for a period of one year, and a resolution to amend the Agricultural Prices Support Act, 1944. What I was arguing was that if we are going to support our agricultural products and sell them in the markets of the world we must enter into trading relationships that will enable us to sell overseas. Mainly I rose to say, and I am going to repeat it, that I thoroughly support the suggestions that have been made—and may I say we have been making them for several years—that we shall not only adopt floor prices that are adequate but that we shall also set up a system of forward pricing so that our farmers will know what they are going to get not a few months ahead, indeed not inadequate support prices that are put into effect after prices have fallen, but the minimum prices they will get for their produce one, two or even three years in advance. It has worked out successfully in another country, perhaps with a different economy, but nonetheless I believe if we are to have a stable and planned agriculture then we have got to adopt a policy of this description. While we support these resolutions, and particularly the one relating to the Agricultural Prices Support Act, 1944, we want to go beyond that both for our farmers and our fishermen whose industries require similar guarantees.

Mr. H. W. Herridge (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, I want to make a few remarks on these two resolutions because they seriously concern quite a number of my constituents. I want to express my support of the principle of the two resolutions, a principle which has been so strongly endorsed by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, and in my own province by the British Columbia fruit growers association. Before proceeding, may I say that I want to support particularly the remarks of the hon. member for Melfort (Mr. Wright) when he said he thought this type of legislation should be made permanent. I

am of the opinion that neither the government nor the farmers can do any long-range planning or have any measure of security so long as this measure is in force only from year to year. It is my opinion that this legislation should be made permanent if we are going to have a sound foundation upon which to build our future agricultural marketing structure.

The fruit growers of British Columbia, as represented by the delegates at the British Columbia fruit growers association annual convention, expressed their strong support of these principles, and also passed a resolution thanking the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner) for finally introducing into the house the Agricultural Products Marketing Act last year. I support the proposals made by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture as to floor prices for bacon, cheese, butter, eggs and so on.

In my riding there are a considerable number of poultry producers, and their number increased greatly during the war years largely at the request of the government for more production. Now they find themselves in a most difficult position. It is my opinion that no section of agriculture is more speculative than the poultry industry or makes a less effective protest to government. Strangely enough, I think it is largely because it is not as well organized as some other branches of agriculture. Its voice is not heard as well on a national basis as some of the other sections of agriculture. The poultry producers are now in a most difficult position. I am quite sure there are many poultry producers in other constituencies who are also faced with the same problems of rising feed costs, other rising costs, and falling prices for their eggs and poultry. In discussing with consumers the situation of the poultry producers, particularly people who live in the cities, I often find there is quite a misconception on the part of consumers as to the share, shall I say, that the poultry producer is getting of the price his products bring. In that connection I want to quote an extract from a brief prepared by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture with respect to support proposals. It has this to say as to eggs:

The average Montreal wholesale price of grade A large eggs in 1949 was 56.4 cents a dozen, slightly higher than the average of 55.8 cents for 1948. In spite of the seasonal high retail price of 75 cents a dozen for August last year, the average retail price for 1949 of 62 cents a dozen was only 14 cents a dozen or 29 per cent higher than for the five years 1925 to 1929. But in 1949 wage rates in Canada were more than twice the rates of the 1925-29 period. In terms of the buying power of urban consumers the average retail price of eggs in 1949 was very reasonable.