

*Root Vegetables Act*

Mr. GRAHAM: The constituency which I represent is very much interested in the onion trade—I think, perhaps, more so than any county in the Dominion. There has been a difference of opinion there; but I think the whole organization in the county is in favour of removing this grade called “sample quality” for the reasons outlined by the minister. They have had several deputations here and I think as a result of a compromise it was decided to substitute “ungraded” for “sample quality.”

Paragraph agreed to.

On paragraph (b):

Mr. MOTHERWELL: The House will probably recall that two years ago we introduced for the first time the principle of selling vegetables on the basis of weight rather than measure. A practice had prevailed for years of selling potatoes by the bag. But there is no standard sized bag in Canada and these bags would run all the way from seventy-five to ninety pounds; no one ever knew when he bought a bag exactly what he was going to get. I think in some places it would represent a bushel and a half, ninety pounds, whereas at other places it would only be eighty pounds, and in other places still only seventy-five pounds. We introduced the principle of selling these articles by weight, but it has created a certain amount of disturbance in the local markets, for example the market in Ottawa and elsewhere, where the practice has prevailed on the part of the growers of selling by the measure—that is by the peck or the gallon. Hence we are conceding to them the right to sell anything under a bushel by measure but the weight by measure must bear an exact relation to the weight if sold by the bushel. We will take the case of a peck of potatoes. It must contain fifteen pounds of potatoes when you come to weigh it. Now if the buyer challenges it, and asks “Is this a peck of potatoes?”—the seller says, “Yes, it is a peck of potatoes; it is a peck measure.” Then the purchaser will say, “Are there fifteen pounds in it?” and the seller says, “Yes.” Then the buyer feels sure he is getting a peck. On the other hand, if there is no weight designation a peck measure might contain very much less than a peck. It depends on how full he packs the container, and how large the potatoes are. I think my hon. friend from Victoria and Carleton (Mr. Caldwell) understands this. In order to give the weight in a measure of vegetables it must be well rounded up, and that of course depends on who is rounding it.

[Mr. Motherwell.]

Mr. CALDWELL: I will admit I do not understand this clause. First the minister says they may sell by measure, and then he says the measure must weigh so much. I do not see the force of that. I think if he said “Sixty pounds shall be a bushel of potatoes,” or “A bushel of potatoes shall weigh sixty pounds,” it would be sufficient. If the section provided that they should not sell by measure at all, but that they should stick to the old principle of selling by weight, we would be on safe ground. In some cases a person will buy a gallon of potatoes, a four-quart measure; if you get one big potato in it and another potato crossways over it, you have got it rounded up with potatoes, but you have not ten pounds. I am sorry to see the minister departing from the principle established two years ago. I agreed with the former bill, and I thought it was right, but under this measure I think a chance is given to the retailers to evade the law when they are permitted to sell by measure. I believe the minister is affording opportunity for a good deal of trouble, because there is no doubt in a great many cases when the potatoes are measured out it will be found that a peck does not weigh fifteen pounds. It depends on the size of the potatoes. If they are medium size there will be fifteen pounds in a peck measure, but if they are large size there will not be fifteen pounds in the measure. If they are small size there may possibly be more than fifteen pounds.

Mr. MOTHERWELL: I agree with my hon. friend, as I did on the previous occasion, that the weight is the proper standard for selling. There is no recognized size of bag; but in the open market the practice of selling by measure has been established; and while it is easy to establish what we call a principle, when you come to administer that among people who are accustomed to something else and do not see the sense of introducing this weight business, or dispensing with the peck or gallon measure, they do not favour it, because they find it more convenient to bring in a load in bags and measure it out by gallons. However I can see no harm in it. As a matter of fact we allow them to sell potatoes by the peck. They can sell potatoes by the peck, but they must have fifteen pounds of potatoes in the measure.

Mr. CAHILL: Does that apply to peanuts?

Mr. MOTHERWELL: No, they are not classified as vegetables. They do not grow the same way.