

# Agricultural Minister Sums Up Discussion On Federal Marketing Bill

## Liberal Arguments in Opposition to Legislation Introduced at Request of Farmers and Producers Throughout Canada Answered in Informative Speech By Hon. Robert Weir.

In summing up the parliamentary discussion on the Dominion Marketing Bill last week Hon. Robert Weir, Minister of Agriculture, reviewed not only the purposes of the bill but the nature of the criticism which had been urged against it by Liberal Opposition speakers. His speech, which was a clear-cut enunciation of the principles involved in this important issue, is of particular interest to our agricultural readers, and is reprinted herewith from Hansard of May 2.

Hon. Mr. Weir: When I previously spoke, in opening this debate, I expressed the hope that this bill would not be thrown into the realm of controversial partisan politics. I asked most sincerely for constructive suggestions with reference to the bill, suggestions that would improve it and make it more possible to effect the aim as set out in the title of the bill.

I should like to take this opportunity to express most sincerely my appreciation of the conscientious and constructive suggestions that have been made by members on both sides of the house, which suggestions, in many instances, I believe will at least be of benefit to the measure. I left no doubt that there were great difficulties confronting the bill, and that the first year's experience with it would perhaps do more to perfect it than any further suggestions that might be made. I felt hon. members on both sides would agree that the fact that obstacles of various kinds stood in the way was not a sufficient reason why an honest attempt should not be made to solve some of these difficulties. I would say then, at the outset, especially because of misinterpretations that have occurred in connection with the bill, leading to the belief that established trade will be wiped out or interfered with, that this is the very opposite of the whole spirit that has led to the introduction of this bill. That means destruction, and destruction means further wastage; whereas the thing we are endeavoring to overcome is the wastage which we agree exists. Only those who have given a good deal of thought to the problems that I have mentioned and to a solution of them are really fitted to appreciate the great difficulties.

First let us consider this—and I shall not attempt to answer in detail each of the points made with which I disagree; I think it will save the time of the house if I do not traverse the ground I have already covered, but rather give my interpretation of the bill and at the same time, without dealing specifically with each objection taken, refer in a general way to the various types of objection taken by different members.

The British Marketing Act

There are those who have stated that if our bill followed the pattern of the British marketing act they would support it. I do not think any hon. member who understands the British marketing act and who has an appreciation of the difficulties with which we are confronted and that we are endeavoring to solve would say that act is adaptable to any great extent to meet our problems. In the first place the

literary involved there is very small in comparison with ours; the distance limitations are quite different and their agriculture itself is not nearly so diverse as ours, so that their conditions are entirely different. Further, the problem to be solved there is to assist the primary industry of a country that is chiefly an importing one, whereas our primary industry is concerned greatly with the problem of exports and of properly regulating the flow of products abroad as well as to our domestic markets.

Specific Canadian Problems

Further, they have one parliament, not ten as we have. They are not confronted, as we are, with the question of provincial rights and other problems that have arisen by reason of the British North America Act. One of the chief principles in the British marketing act is price fixing. In this country there is a great body of opinion that is against price fixing including even some of those hon. members who spoke freely in favour of the British act. There is also in the British legislation a provision for restricted production and to maintain that restricted production is not referred to in any particular in our bill. Therefore I say that for those reasons the British marketing act which is applied to meet different conditions of those countries does not adapt itself to any great extent to solve the problems confronting us. We have considered our problems and have endeavored, after study to produce a bill that, when passed, will enable us to set up machinery that will meet the peculiar needs and overcome the special difficulties with which we have to contend in Canada in the marketing of our primary products. In so far as certain principles that we have found it necessary to adopt are the same as those appearing in the British act, we have taken advantage of them because to a certain extent they have been tried out and been found successful.

The First Difficulty

The first difficulty that confronted us in attacking our problems was the limited jurisdiction of the act. The government as a result of provincial rights as laid down in the British North America Act. I think hon. members who will earnestly study the bill with a desire to see the best in it will agree with me that in it there is nothing that will conflict in any way with the British North America Act. The whole bill is based on a spirit of co-operation to fill that need which I believe the great majority of the Canadian people feel, irrespective of the province in which they live, to have a more economical system for marketing the products of our primary producers. In that connection, because of the flexibility that has been forced upon us in any bill we introduce, I believe we are in a position to meet the question of provincial rights as laid down in the British North America Act. I last spoke, namely, to put the power for the regulation of the marketing of the products of the primary producers into the hands of the primary producers themselves in so far as they give evidence that they are anxious to have that power to handle the regulation of the marketing of their own products as shown by the extent to which they are prepared to organize themselves into co-operative organizations or established channels of trade. I believe there is in this country a great body of opinion in favor of cooperative marketing, while there are others who have become known as private enterprise. In this regard I am reminded of a statement made by a noted Anglican divine of Toronto whose church I used to attend regularly when I was at the university. He was discussing the question of church bazaars. My colleague, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Rhodes) says that I must be careful on this question. This Anglican divine said in reference to church bazaars that he did not believe the men of his congregation were any more anxious to be taken in the name of the Lord than in any other way. I think many farmers and producers in this country are not particularly anxious who markets their products as long as they receive the greatest returns from them and the work is done efficiently. In connection with marketing I believe healthy competition is essential but there must be no monopoly.

BASIS OF THE BILL

The basis of this bill is that a representative body of producers will submit a scheme that they have had instances in which they are interested in a way that no one else is, for the marketing of their primary products. Some hon. members have suggested that if we had stated in the bill that there should be a poll and that if producers representing seventy-five per cent of the production voted in favor of a particular scheme and authority would be given for the other twenty-five per cent to be forced in, they would support the bill. Due to the different problems

that we have in the marketing of primary products in Canada it is not possible to insert such a provision. For example, let us take one of the simplest of the primary products—apples. The problem of marketing apples in Nova Scotia is different from that in Ontario and also from that in British Columbia. In Nova Scotia for the crop year 1933-34 eighty-nine per cent of the apples were exported, so that their major problem is one of export. In Ontario thirty-seven per cent of their apples were exported so that their problem is chiefly a domestic one. In British Columbia some forty-seven per cent of their apples were exported; their problem therefore is pretty well divided between domestic and export marketing. That is one instance, but I could give a large number, showing why we do not consider that we should fix any limitation as to how this scheme shall be brought into effect. In this country we should make it inadvisable to differentiate products in different parts of the country. Further, it has been left open in order that bodies of producers may meet their provincial government, submit their schemes to them, and if the provincial government thinks well of the scheme and allows them to form a local board with the powers given in this bill, or perhaps with different powers, we can if necessary use that board as our agent under the Dominion Marketing Act. The basis of the bill is to put power into the hands of the producers themselves, in so far as they indicate through their own organization that they wish it, and thus there will be no conflict with provincial rights. For these reasons I believe it is sound policy to leave the provisions as flexible as they are. Hon. members have suggested the possibility that the local board, to take the extreme case stated by one hon. member, might consist of a number of Chinese laundrymen. I do not know whether there is anything in our legislation setting up the railway commission to prevent Chinese laundrymen, if they were to form such a board, from being appointed to it, and it is just as reasonable to expect that they would be appointed to it as this board. The clause here is very clear; it has been referred to by so many members of the opposition that I think it well to quote section 5, subsection 5:

(5) Every scheme as approved shall state

(g) the number of persons who shall comprise the local board and the basis of their selection.

The Primary Object

That is, the group of producers in their scheme must state the nature of the board that is to handle the scheme that they propose. I know that in some branches of the industry they feel that the board should consist entirely of producers; others are very decided that there should be producer representation, and representation from the trade that is vitally interested in the marketing of that product, and also that consumers should be represented. But the primary object of this bill is to give power to the producers even to the extent of recommending and setting out the manner in which the board is to be appointed.

The second principle of the bill is that power shall be taken to investigate the spread, using the term in the general and popular definition. What we have in mind is this. Here is a product and here is the consumer, and the cost of getting the product from the producer to the consumer is the spread. Therefore power is taken to ensure if necessary that there shall be no unfair profit taken, no unfair manipulation in this process that takes place, to increase unduly the cost between the time the product leaves the producer and the time it reaches the consumer. To meet that situation, if a small group of producers wish to organize solely for the production of the best quality product in uniform supply, they will be assured of that protection and of efficient marketing of their product. I do not think any hon. member can object to either of those two principles, namely, first, giving into the hands of the producer the power to handle his own product, and second, assuring for the protection of both producer and consumer that there shall be no unfair profit taken, no unfair manipulation by either party towards the production or towards the rational, honest marketing of the products.

Imports and Exports

Then in the third place we have taken power under this act to limit, if necessary, imports and exports. I do not think that any one can take objection to that. We have had instances in which I would like to cite to the house, but because they are connected with individuals closely associated with members of the house I shall not do so. I shall be glad, however, to show to any hon. member a description, for instance, of one shipment of cattle to the old country within the last few months that had a very damaging effect on the reputation of our country. Such a shipment should be prevented. I feel that

would have been in the interest of the producer himself had he been prohibited from exporting them, and it certainly would have been a benefit to all other live stock producers of Canada who wished to avail themselves of the market for our cattle in the United Kingdom to take the best advantage of that market by sending their best quality products.

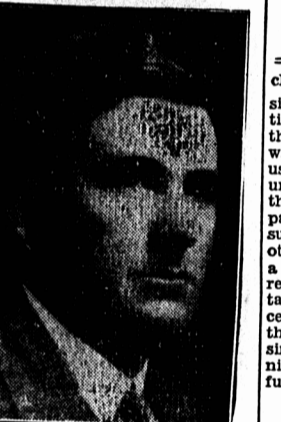
Certain amendments have been prepared that will be submitted in connection with this bill—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Hon. Mr. Weir:—not to change the principle of the bill in any way but to clarify certain points such as that referred to by the hon. member for Yale (Mr. Estlin), and I believe the hon. member for New Westminster (Mr. Reid). It was my understanding that these matters were taken care of in the bill as it stands—I think I would have no difficulty in proving to anyone that they are not as it is advisable that this clarification should be made. The amendments are ready and will be brought down when the bill is before the committee.

Liberal Criticism Answered

I have dealt in a general way with the criticisms that have been leveled against the bill; first the objection that the producers lose control, that control is taken out of their hands and put into the hands of whoever may be appointed to the boards; second, the objection to the type of board that may be set up. I think one hon. member mentioned that it might consist of about fifteen old decrepit politicians. I could not help but be struck with the thought, when he was speaking, that he had in his mind, a very definite picture of being chairman of this board if it were in his power to set it up. But I feel that his opportunity in that direction will be very slight. I believe he is better qualified, if I may use the illustration, to use a little pick to scratch the mortar out of a standing building, hoping it will fall down and be destroyed, rather than to take any constructive step in the erection of a building. As I have said before, the purpose of this bill is construction, not destruction, and a sane hon. member will agree that people of that type should not look for any position on the board.



HON. ROBERT WEIR, MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE

Answers Mr. King's Criticism

I have dealt so far with criticisms repeated by various hon. members. I should like for the few minutes remaining at my disposal to deal with some specific criticisms made by the right hon. leader of the opposition (Mr. Mackenzie King). In fifteen different places in his speech he referred to the principle of this bill as being restriction of production. In one place he is very emphatic that that is the chief principle of the bill. I would not for an instant suggest that the right hon. gentleman did not in his own mind understand that to be a fundamental principle, but I maintain that nowhere in this bill is restriction of production mentioned. It is simply for the purpose of regulating the production on the market. The right hon. gentleman stated that producers had to be licensed. He spoke in favour of orderly marketing, and in his amendment put himself on record as favouring that. What orderly marketing could we have of a product in this country if we did not know the quantity of that product that was to be placed on the market in any given time? The right hon. gentleman stated that information can be obtained in a way which producers to submit what they expect to produce, the acreage seeded, the number of head of live stock and so on. That work is done now by various branches of the agricultural industry that have approached us already with schemes, they will set up, under which they undertake to license producers of their own product for the very reason that it is impossible for this government to have any orderly marketing unless they have the knowledge of the volume of the product that is to come forward. That is their own suggestion.

Producers' Request

In this connection I should like to say in passing that every branch of the industry that has approached us has asked only that it be allowed to stand on its own feet. But these are the schemes already organized. They do not wish any money from the consolidated revenue fund, but there are other branches of the industry that are not so thoroughly organized, and to tide them over until they can organize for orderly marketing, to insert some provision in this bill so that such branches may be looked after in the meantime. That is the only reason for that provision in the bill to which a number of hon. members have objected. Many branches of the industry are so upset that they are not in a position to organize at once, perhaps because of the number of people involved or the area covered by that particular branch, and those branches

are in the greatest need of assistance. We also feel that conditions may arise in the future, as they have arisen in the past, which will make it highly desirable for us to extend sufficient assistance, under the powers we have taken by this bill, in the marketing of that particular product in order to make such marketing profitable where otherwise it would be conducted at a loss. That is one of the chief reasons why some of the power taken under this bill may seem excessive though I do not consider that power excessive at all. We are simply applying what are recognized as sound principles in successful enterprise in this country.

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—is hard to define, easy to appreciate

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Authority Necessary

The least that we as a government and as members of parliament, irrespective of party, can do is to use the resources of the country where necessary to assist the primary producers. In that connection I would say that if any persons attempted, by means of the machinery set up under this bill, to revolutionize the entire marketing system of the dominion in a month, six months or in a year, undoubtedly they would do a great deal more harm than good, but we do feel that it is necessary to have this power, which will be used as any sane man would use it and as we, in our heart of hearts, all agree that it should be used, irrespective of the opposition that has been raised.

A further argument used by the right hon. leader of the opposition was that this bill took away the rights of parliament, that there was too much compulsion in it, and in his amendment he stated that he was unalterably opposed to compulsory legislation. I think perhaps the hon. member for Melville (Mr. Motherwell) has answered that argument in a better way than I could answer it, and in a way which must impress the right hon. gentleman. The hon. member for Melville cited the compulsion that is necessary to enforce the policy in regard to bovine tuberculosis and the testing of cattle. I think there was almost civil war in Nova Scotia when that policy was first enforced, but now there are no further complaints wherever it is applied. I believe it is one of the most constructive policies we have ever had in connection with our live stock industry. I believe the hon. member for Melville stated further that they had proceeded even without order in council to prevent cattle from being shipped out of this country.

Partisan Criticism

Hon. members on this side of the house have spoken at length and have cited the legislation of a compulsory nature introduced by the right hon. gentleman when he was in power. One cannot but feel that this objection or criticism was raised not from the standpoint of merit but rather for effect. The right hon. gentleman referred to the Magna Charta and said that this bill affected the rights received by the people under the provisions of the Magna Charta. I am sure I was not the only hon. member in the house who wondered, when the right hon. gentleman made that statement, if he could have been transported, with the attitude of mind that he has exhibited towards this bill, back to Runnymede on that fine May day in 1215, whether he would have been on the side of the barons or on the side of the king. The barons were spreading authority; they were delegating it to a place where it never had been delegated before. Further in this connection I might ask the right hon. gentleman if there ever has

been a session of parliament in Canada since confederation during which parliament did not delegate authority to bodies outside parliament.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I submit that while this bill is a long way from being perfect—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. Weir: I greatly appreciate the fact that only two hon. gentlemen opposite applauded that remark; it is the highest compliment that could be paid to the intelligence exhibited across the way. This bill can be perfected only through experience and the overcoming of obstacles which will indicate what changes should be made in the bill.

I close my remarks, Mr. Speaker, with a further appeal for constructive suggestion when the bill is in committee. I had thought, following the suggestion of hon. members of different parties, that it might be well to refer this bill to the agriculture committee or to a sub-committee of that committee, but as time is the chief essence of the right hon. leader of the opposition has put himself on record as being unalterably opposed to it, and as it has been stated that the official opposition will fight this bill to the last ditch, I feel—and I regret it—that there will be little gain in wasting the time of any committee if the bill is to be fought out in the house clause by clause and phrase by phrase.

(At the conclusion of Hon. Mr. Weir's remarks the House of Commons divided on the motion, the bill carrying on a vote of 120 to 60. All the Conservative members—including Hon. J. A. MacDonald, Mr. W. Chester S. McClure and Mr. J. H. Myers, from this Province—supported the bill, as did the Progressive, United Farmer and C.C.F. members and two Liberal members, one of whom, Hon. Mr. Motherwell, was Minister of Agriculture in the late Liberal Government. Mr. A. E. MacLean, sole Liberal representative from Prince Edward Island, absented himself from the House while the vote was being taken; but he had previously paired off with Hon. Mr. Jones, conservative member for Royal, and must be regarded as having opposed the legislation.)

## PUBLIC FORUM

This column is open for the discussion of correspondents of questions of interest. The Charlottetown Guardian does not necessarily endorse the opinions of correspondents.

(Continued from page 4)

many amusing experiences on our trip up Queen Street.

The late Col. Starn refused to give us a cent. Starn held him while I took his watch which he redeemed for twenty dollars when he overtook us further up the street. Jamieson refused to give anything. Starns held him and I took twenty dollars out of the bill.

After the house prorogued in 1913 we went to the Premier and asked him what roads the Government proposed to open and we were informed that they had decided not to open any roads without a petition signed by at least 75 per cent of the voters on that road. We had in mind the restoration of the tourist trade and the first road we attempted to open was from Charlottetown to the Cliff Hotel, St. Eliers Road to Union Road, and Union Road to Guernsey Road Corner, then to Stanhope. We had to wait until the roads dried up before we could do anything. Then we made up three teams of canvassers—George E. Auld and George McDonald, L. H. Beer, now Col. Beer, and Dr. Alley, Bruce Stewart and myself. We would meet on the market square about ten o'clock, three horses and wagons, and be back at night with at least 80 per cent of the names from the districts we had canvassed. We soon opened that road and very shortly extensive work began improving this road until it was the best on the Island. This example set the ball rolling and the roads were gradually opened up. We had a great picnic at the Cliff Hotel the summer the road was opened and the automobiles drove all the people along the road from Charlottetown to the Cliff to the picnic. The night before the picnic the people on the Brackley Point road held an anti-auto meeting at Harrington at which some violent speeches were made and an anti-association formed at which a gentleman residing on the Union Road beyond the Gurney Road turn was elected President.

On the day of the picnic, after we had all the people transported to the Cliff, Auld said to me: "I see Mr.— was elected president of the Anti-Auto Association at Harrington East last night. Suppose we bring him to the picnic?" So away we went and after a very excellent lunch we had the newly elected President of the Brackley Point Road Anti-Auto Association making a very fine speech on the lawn of the Cliff Hotel in the favor of the running of automobiles. This picnic was an annual event for several summers. And so the feeling in favor of the automobile spread. In 1914 war broke out and we did not pay much attention to days or roads when called upon to help in recruiting or war work, and I think in only two cases were complaints laid, both against myself. The first was when the late Col. S. R. Jenkins ordered me to take him to Tisbury after a deserter. They fined me \$200 or two months in jail. The second was for taking Lieut. McLean to Georgetown to see his family before going overseas. Lieut. McLean arrived in Charlottetown from ValCartier on the late train Saturday night and was sailing overseas from Halifax on Tuesday. Sunday morning he tried to get a team but could not do so and after church the late Rev. Geo. C. Tay-

lor, then pastor of Zion Church, called me up and asked me if I would take McLean home. I replied at once that I would be glad to do so. They fined me \$200 or two months for this, but we had considerable fun over the case which came up before Magistrate D. Edgar Shaw. We got the case adjourned for, I think, about a dozen times and had a lot of fun. I paid no fines in any of the three cases in which I was convicted and what was the use of sending me to jail at the expense of the Government?

When the Victory Loan campaign was started in 1917 Mr. C. H. B. Longworth was appointed General Executive Chairman for the Province and I was appointed Chairman and Organizer for Queens and Kings Counties. This meant my travelling over every part of the two counties and it is difficult to see how the work could have been done in the short time allotted to us. I used my automobile on every day of the week, sometimes speaking at four meetings a day at places many miles apart and scarcely ever getting home before midnight. The people everywhere were kind and considerate and no one ever suggested I was violating the automobile law every day. Especially do I remember the courtesy of Mr. J. A. Dewar of New Perth. Mr. Dewar had been one of the strongest opponents of the automobile but after a night meeting held in the hall at New Perth he came out with me to my car and took great pains to explain to me the best road to Charlottetown, totally ignoring the fact that I was violating the law by running my automobile on every road on that particular day.

I held the same position with the Victory Loan in 1918 and 1919 and did the work in the same way without any complaints. Of course in 1919 the new Automobile Act was in force and the trouble was all over.

As I said at the beginning this should be of some interest to the younger generation, possibly to some of the older. It makes me feel rather sad as I review this period and our sight in how few of us are left.

I am Sir, etc.  
W. K. ROGERS

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