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HOW FOOD PRICES IN CANADA ARE MANIPULATED BY PIRATES

Potatoes are Now a Great Luxury in Some Parts of Canada---Government Will Allow the Farmers to Sell Where They Please at Present---No Thought of Placing an Embargo on Mr. Flavelle's Activities---Profits and Patriotism.

(By H. F. Gadsby.)

Ottawa, March 17.—The Hon. Mr. Burrell's statement that there is an exportable surplus of Canadian potatoes amounting to over two million bushels and that Ontario is the only province in which there is a shortage, draws attention with a jerk to the operations of the food speculators in that part of Canada which was chiefly instrumental in throwing the Laurier Government and its free trade policy out and putting the Borden government in.

If, as Mr. Burrell says, there are two million bushels of potatoes over all food and seed requirements, then it is quite plain that the high prices in Ontario are not due to scarcity but to manipulation by the food pirates. In New Brunswick, whence most of the Ontario potatoes are brought, potatoes sell at a reasonable price, but freight

charges and the exorbitant demands of the middlemen make these homely vegetables a luxury by the time they reach Ontario.

To a deputation of potato growers from New Brunswick the other day, Acting Premier Foster announced that the government did not contemplate an embargo on potato export "at present." Mark that "at present." It seems to breathe a threat that an embargo is a possibility of the future.

For the first time in years the potato growers of New Brunswick have a chance to make a little money. A high tariff government soaks them 40 per cent. on everything they buy, so naturally when they get a chance to make up some of the difference, they go to it like a pup to a root.

A Real Concession.

To these and others like them, the government announces that it will not

prevent them selling in what market they please "at present."

Of course if the hue and cry against the Ontario food speculators gets too noisy the government may take it out on the N. B. potato growers, just to divert attention.

If the New Brunswick potato grower will cast his eye on the Northwest farmer, who is practically debarred of selling his wheat in the United States, he will be better able to grasp what a great concession the Borden government has made.

It is even more wonderful when one reflects that New Brunswick lately reversed the political reflection of its Legislature and that consequently N. B. potatoes are now Liberal in the eyes of the Borden government. This explains the reservation in the Hon. Mr. Foster's "at present." A province which has gone back on the Borden government's gospel, a province, moreover, from which the Borden government fondly hoped to draw a majority at the next general election, cannot hope to remain in favor any longer. "At present" is not a promise, but a threat.

Certain articles of diet are earmarked that way. For instance, tea is Liberal—and when the leading tea merchant, who is a Liberal, endeavored to make his selling price bear a reasonable relation to the war cost, the Borden government jumped on him right away.

Bacon, on the contrary, is Conservative. It has a friend at court in the person of Mr. J. W. Flavelle, Chairman of the Imperial Munitions Board, Maccenas to Sir Thos. White and Premier Borden's pet. Bacon has been allowed to soar. Nobody dunks or even hints at putting an embargo on any of Mr. Flavelle's activities.

The Food Speculators.

People around here are wondering why the Borden government doesn't call in Mr. Flavelle to deal with the food speculators. Diamond cut diamond, you know. Set a Flavelle to catch a food speculator. They could not fool Mr. Flavelle for a minute—he has been over the ground. Just now Mr. Flavelle, besides his job as boss of the shell game, has a place on a number of royal commissions which are supposed to deplore in a general way the high cost of living, but not to get down to cases. In fact if they ever started to bark at anybody in particular Mr. Flavelle would hear it and at once put a stop to it in the interests of peace and quietness.

The packing company of which Mr. Flavelle is the head, made as much as 150 per cent. profit in the Boer war. Mr. Flavelle himself was one of the noble Toronto eighteen who helped to

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defeat reciprocity and prevent the United States packer from paying more money to the Canadian farmer for hogs and taking less money from the Canadian consumer for bacon. Similarly Mr. Flavelle raised no objection when the Borden government cajoled the Northwest into growing a bumper crop of wheat in 1915 and then letting it rust in the barn sooner than permit a free exchange with the United States.

Profits and Patriotism.

As chairman of the Imperial Munitions Board, Mr. Flavelle does not work for filthy lucre—at least not on this side of the Atlantic. His beef contract is direct with the British War Office and this leaves him free to score the Canadian profiteers for letting people see them making so much money. Mr. Flavelle has suggested more than once that everybody's profits but his own be sacrificed on the altar of patriotism. This reminds one of the good old times in the fall of 1911, when Mr. Flavelle and his fellow food barons wrapped their monopoly intact in the

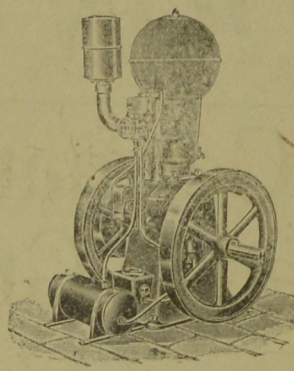
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