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Committee of the Cabinet appointed to
deal with matters concerning the
Cost of Living.

REPORT No. 1.

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Agricultural Prices and Control
Boards.

UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA.

The decreased supplies of certain agricultural products, and the consequent rise in the prices of these products, as a result of the severe drought through which the country passed during the second half of last year, has loosened a storm of protest on the part of urban consumers against the so-called increased cost of living, and has led to a sustained campaign in the Press against control boards and the control board system as the reputed cause of the increase in food prices. A careful analysis of the position, however, shows that, except temporarily as a result of the severe drought conditions in the country towards the end of last year, neither have the prices of agricultural products risen unduly nor have the control boards had anything to do with such rise as there has been.

On the subject of the export of our surplus production of agricultural commodities, there is also some lack of understanding on the part of our critics. It will be apparent that, in a country such as ours which has to face good and bad years, periods of flood and drought, unexpected fluctuations in temperature conditions and even on occasion disastrous visitations of locusts and other pests, provision must be made for an output considerably in excess of what can normally be absorbed if we are to maintain supplies of agricultural produce, such as butter, maize, etc., to meet the demands of our market. Failure to make such provision would inevitably lead to serious shortage in bad years. In good years the difficulty is that there is a supply in excess of the demand and this, if thrown on the market, would result in a disastrous fall in prices and the bankruptcy of many farmers. To avoid this, it is necessary to have some outlet for the sale of this surplus of a nature sufficiently elastic to permit of wide variations of supply from year to year. The ideal market for this purpose is the export market. It can absorb quantities whether they be large or small, and while the price returns are relatively low, there are not the heavy distribution charges that would have to be faced if this surplus was to be sold and distributed over the local market without at the same time disastrously affecting prices.

The complaint is often made that, whilst we charge a relatively high price for local consumption, we sell overseas at a lower figure and it is contended that we should distribute any surplus we have at this lower figure in our own country. This, of course, is not possible except at the expense of the taxpayer. To involve ourselves in the wholesale and retail distribution of any commodity is to involve ourselves in the cost of this work, and this cost added to the export price would in fact bring the cost of this surplus to as high or higher figure than is normally charged on the market.

There is the further consideration that, even if in any one year we succeed in increasing our local demand by expanding the internal market, we will in subsequent years require to increase production to meet this larger market, and, in addition, to provide a surplus against the possibility of an adverse season and the same difficulty regarding disposal will arise.

THE PRICE POSITION:

An analysis of available price statistics (see appendix table I.) shows that during the depression agricultural wholesale prices fell to lower levels than those of industrial products and ruled at considerably lower levels than the latter until the end of 1935. During 1936 the index of agricultural products, largely as a result of the increased wool prices for that year, rose sharply, but still lagged behind that of industrial products, and it was only in 1937 that the margin between the all commodity index and that of agricultural products became appreciably smaller. Neither the index for all commodities nor that for agricultural products had, however, reached the pre-depression level yet in 1937, the figures being 84 and 81 respectively as compared with 100 for the average for 1927-29.

A study of the indices of wholesale prices of individual products in table II. (appendix) shows that, until July, 1937, the prices of the majority of these ruled at considerably lower levels than before the depression. Since then an appreciable upward tendency is discernable in the prices of most products, but especially in those of beef, mutton, onions, potatoes, apples and wheat. A further study of these figures shows that the increase in prices during this period was directly attributable to seasonal shortages aggravated by the prolonged drought which lasted until well into the summer. This fact is clearly brought out by the decline in the January indices as compared with those for December. Thus the January index for maize stood at 80 as against 89 for December, eggs 70 against 88, beef 129 against 138, mutton 110 against 127, butter-fat 83 against 94, onions 181 against 225 and potatoes 82 against 136.

The only products for which the January index was still higher than the December figures were wheat, bacon and apples, of which wheat is the only

significant figure in so far as the prices of the other products are subject to seasonal shortages at this time of the year. In the case of wheat the present high prices, while not entirely justifiable, are directly caused by the present short crop as a result of adverse climatic conditions during last year.

The above brief review shows that, except for the rise in prices of most agricultural products towards the end of last year, as a result of the prolonged drought, agricultural prices, while they have responded to the improved economic conditions in the country during the past few years, still lag behind the prices of industrial products, and have in nearly every instance not yet reached the pre-depression levels. The decline in the January indices clearly shows that, in general, prices are once more receding from the peak reached towards the end of last year as a result of the severe drought.

CONTROL BOARDS.

It has been shown that the recent rise in the price of agricultural products was directly attributable to the prolonged and severe drought of the past year. Yet the blame for the increased prices has been laid entirely at the door of the control boards, and this has served as an excuse for the launching of a vigorous campaign in the Press and by representatives of urban consumers against the whole control board system. It was remarkable to observe in some newspapers two-column reports, under big headlines, of the serious position of the drought in country districts as a result of which crops were destroyed and farmers were daily suffering livestock losses, and, on the very next page, under equally prominent headlines, reports of interviews with representatives of Housewives' Leagues and other kindred bodies about the increased price of agricultural products. No attempt was made to bring the rising prices of agricultural products into relationship with the drought, but, by implication the blame for the increased prices was attributed to the control board system and the Marketing Act.

Another instance of misrepresentation appeared recently in a Cape Town paper, when it was stated that consumers blamed the Dairy Industry Control Board for the recent rise in the price of eggs. It is difficult to understand this conclusion, as neither the Dairy Industry nor any other Control Board has anything to do with poultry products. The recent rise in the price of eggs is entirely the result of the normal seasonal shortage due to the off-season for eggs.

In view of these mis-statements and the agitation which it has given rise to, it is necessary to analyse the position of the control boards briefly. It may first of all be explained that not a single regulatory board is as yet functioning under the machinery established by the Marketing Act. The existing boards, viz., Dairy, Meat, Maize, Wheat and Tobacco, are operating under the limited powers conferred upon them by the relevant acts; powers which are largely advisory, and which generally do not enable the boards to exert a strong influence on the course of prices. In spite of these limited powers the boards have, however, exercised a marked stabilising influence on prices to the benefit of both consumers and producers, as a brief review of the operations of the various boards will show.

1. THE DAIRY INDUSTRY CONTROL BOARD.

To improve the conditions in this industry, the Dairy Industry Control Board was established in 1930, and, by means of controlled export of the surplus production, it has succeeded in bringing about a great measure of price stability in the interests of both producers and consumers.

For the five year period *before this control was established* (1925-1929) the retail price of butter fluctuated from 1s. 9d. per lb. on the average during the summer months to 2s. 11d. per lb. during the early spring months, the average price being 2s. 1½d. per lb. For the period following 1930 to 1934 this price fluctuated between 1s. 4d. per lb. and 2s. per lb. From January, 1935, to October, 1937, the retail price ranged from 1s. 5d. to 1s. 9d. per lb., the average for the period being 1s. 6d. *In other words, over the past two years and since control was established the consumer has not only paid from 6d. to 8d. per lb. less for butter, but owing to stable conditions, the average quality of the butter paid for has been much higher.*

A comparison between the retail price of butter in the Union and that in the United Kingdom further shows that control has not placed a burden upon the Union consumer in any way. During the four years 1927 to 1930, prior to control, the average retail price of butter in the Union was 2s. 2d. per lb. as against 1s. 9d. for the United Kingdom, or a margin of 5d. per lb. For the period 1931 to 1937 the average price in the United Kingdom was 1s. 2d. per lb. as against 1s. 7d. for South Africa, or again a margin of 5d.

Compared with other exporting countries the position of the local consumer similarly shows up favourably. In the case of Australia, for instance, the average price during 1927 to 1930 was 1s. 10d. per lb. as against 2s. 2d. for South Africa—a margin of 4d. per lb. For the period 1931 to 1936 the Australian price averaged 1s. 5d., while the South African price was 1s. 7d. per lb.—the margin having been reduced to 2d. per lb.

If it is borne in mind that the United Kingdom is an importing country, and very often a market into which the surplus agricultural products of all the world are dumped regardless of the price realized for them, the above figures prove conclusively that control in the dairy industry has not entailed any sacrifice on the part of the consumer in the Union, while it has relatively improved the position of the Union consumer when compared with that of the consumer in other exporting countries such as Australia.

Criticism has been levelled against the export policy of the Board on the ground that butter has on occasion been over-exported, thus creating an artificial shortage during the spring and early summer months. In dealing with the removal of the surplus production of butter, the Board has a choice of the following alternatives:—

- (a) To endeavour, by lowering prices, to absorb the whole output internally.

An essential condition for the success of this method is that the resulting over-all price should not be so low as to throw a large number of producers out of employment. Experience with the State-aided butter scheme has shown that the slight reduction in the internal price of butter which would be possible if this alternative were applied, would not be sufficient to encourage local consumption to any marked extent. In the case of the State-aided scheme the price had to be reduced to 6d. per lb. before the poorer classes of the people could afford to buy butter. The price is, of course, far below the cost of production anywhere in the world. The carrying out of this alternative would, therefore, ruin the Dairy Industry.

- (b) To store stocks in excess of normal requirements, in order to provide against the possibility of shortage through drought conditions.

Such shortages as occur are generally due to drought conditions in the spring. To carry out this alternative would therefore involve carrying stocks from the previous summer right through the winter. By this time the butter would have deteriorated to such an extent that consumers would complain about having to use stale storage butter. Should this stored butter not be required it would have to be disposed of overseas at the prices obtainable for deteriorated butter, and storage and finance charges would have to be written off. This would involve the industry in much heavier losses than are involved in the importation of butter occasionally to meet a shortage. Moreover, this alternative involves heavy finance and storage charges in both cases.

- (c) These considerations leave as the only suitable alternative the policy now followed by the Dairy Industry Control Board. This policy is to export the surplus butter as it accumulates, while leaving sufficient quantities in the country to meet all normal requirements, and then, in the event of a shortage occurring as a result of drought conditions developing in the spring and summer months, to import such quantities as may be necessary to meet any shortage.

The most advantageous economic exploitation of the agricultural resources of the Union entails the development of the dairy industry as an important branch of the livestock industry. Once the Union's livestock industry has been re-organised and improved to the extent that it would absorb all our surplus production of maize and other fodder crops, it must necessarily mean an increased surplus production of animal products. It is, therefore, necessary that timely steps should be taken for the development of an export market for these products. A development of this kind, involving as it does a more efficient organization of production generally results in a lower cost to the consumer. The fall in prices referred to on page 1 above may partly be ascribed to this cause.

Brief reference must be made here to the distribution of butter, cheese and milk under the State-aided scheme. The point is frequently made that butter is being exported while the less fortunate classes of the people have to go without. Experience has shown that, unless the price of these products is reduced to very much below cost of production, the poorer classes still do not buy these products to any extent. The State-aided scheme was, therefore, introduced whereby butter is made available to the poorer class of our people at prices far below the normal retail price. Under this scheme milk is supplied to school children, or cheese where milk is not available. Over 200,000 lb. of butter, 150,000 lb. of cheese and over 100,000 gallons of milk are distributed under this scheme monthly at an annual cost to the taxpayer of £230,000.

The importance of this scheme from a national health point of view cannot be over-emphasised, and the unsolicited commendation accorded the scheme by teachers and welfare associations bears ample testimony to the beneficial results which the country is deriving from this investment. At the same time it must be pointed out that the financial burden involved falls entirely upon the taxpayer and there is a limit to what can be done in this way.

2. THE MEAT CONTROL BOARD.

The development of the meat industry, as an important branch of the livestock industry, offers a secure basis for the most economic exploitation of the natural agricultural and pastoral resources of the country. In order to develop the meat industries along well organised and co-ordinated lines, the Livestock and Meat Industries Act of 1934 was passed, which provided for the establishment of a Control Board, as an essential part of the whole scheme.

The powers exercised by the Board in terms of the above Act are very limited and, as far as influencing prices is concerned, are confined to the regulation of supplies to the local market. That the Board has, during the short period of its existence exercised these powers judiciously in the interests of both the producer and the consumer, is clearly evidenced by the fact that, while the wholesale price of beef and mutton has been maintained at reasonable levels the retail price has, except as a result of the drought towards the end of last year, remained at well below the pre-depression levels. This is clearly illustrated by the following figures:—

	Wholesale Prices. Average, 1927-29=100*		Retail Prices. 1929=100.	
	Beef.	Mutton.	Beef.	Mutton.
1930.. .. .	96	75	99	96
1931.. .. .	89	62	93	89
1932.. .. .	64	53	85	77
1933.. .. .	79	82	89	82
1934.. .. .	89	113	99	97
(a) 1935	86	96	99	98
1936	93	93	99	97
1937	104	104	102	99
	—	—	—	—
July, 1937	81	101	100	97
(b) { October, 1937	115	106	103	100
December, 1937	138	127	111	108
January, 1938	129	110	112	110
	—	—	—	—

(a) Control was established in August, 1934.

(b) The scarce period as a result of last year's severe drought.

During the scarce period the Board not only issued every permit applied for but allocated additional quotas to the adjoining territories. As a result of the fairly general rains in the interior of the country increased supplies have been readily forthcoming and prices declined towards the end of January.

In recognition of the rôle which an improved livestock industry must eventually play in the agriculture of the Union the Department in collaboration with the Control Board has instituted comprehensive measures for the development of the meat industry. Among these may be mentioned:—

- (a) The proclamation of cattle improvement areas in which only approved bulls may be kept;
- (b) the subsidisation of approved bulls by making a contribution towards the purchase price thereof;
- (c) experiments in the production of better quality mutton and lamb;
- (d) encouragement of better feeding practices;
- (e) the payment of an export subsidy on the better grades of meat in order to offer farmers the necessary financial inducement to improve their animals, and at the same time to develop an export market for the growing surplus production which an improved livestock industry must necessarily entail.

Criticism has been levelled against the export of prime meat on account of the scarcity of this quality of meat on the local market. In this connection it must, however, be pointed out that until the Government decided to subsidise the export of meat the margin in prices between compound and prime meat on the local market was so small that farmers were not encouraged to improve their animals. The cattle improvement policy has only been in operation during the last few years and it is, therefore, premature to expect a large supply of prime beef to have resulted from it at this stage. With the inducement now offered to the farmers, cattle are being rapidly improved, and consumers should, within a reasonably short time, be supplied with all the prime meat they require.

At the same time it must be emphasised that, as in the case of other countries, such as Rhodesia, it is necessary to provide an outlet for our growing surplus production of meat. The conversion of our surplus maize and other crops into

livestock and livestock products, which will lead to a more stable agriculture in the Union, renders it still more necessary that timely steps should be taken to provide for such an outlet for the future.

3. THE MEALIE INDUSTRY CONTROL BOARD.

Maize is the most important crop produced in the Union, and out of a total of 100,000 farmers in the Union, over 60,000 are engaged in maize production. During the depression maize prices declined to unprecedented low levels and threatened ruin to more than half the farmers of the Union. The Government accordingly was forced to take action in order to prevent such a large number of farmers from going under, and the export quota scheme was introduced under which the surplus was removed from the country by forced export. More recently this has been supplemented by the redemption of excess export certificates.

Much of the criticism of maize prices in the local market was based on the difference between the local and the world price for this product.

As producer of maize the Union had, however, an interest which consumer countries did not have. If the local price had fallen to the entirely unremunerative world level large numbers of producers would have been ruined. This would have caused an exceedingly difficult unemployment problem in the Union.

It must be admitted that consumers in the Union had to pay higher prices than consumers in, say, the United Kingdom. But as a result large numbers of their fellow-countrymen were supported and the productive organization of the country was kept intact during the depression. Expenditure of this kind is similar to expenditure on maintaining machinery and plant while a factory is at a standstill, with the exception that in this case our fellow citizens required to be fed and clothed and housed.

Moreover, while maize prices were kept higher than export prices, it is a significant fact, generally overlooked that they still rule lower than they did before the depression, when the present levels of wages were largely fixed. This is illustrated by the following figures:—

	Index of Wholesale Maize Prices.	Index of Wholesale prices of all groups of Agricultural Products.	Index of all Com- modity Wholesale Prices.
1927-29	100	100	100
30	60	68	86
31	60	63	83
32	51	51	76
33	76	67	78
34	82	77	85
35	60	66	79
36	91	77	82
37	75	81	84
1937, January	98	81	84
July	66	81	84
October	68	80	86
1938, January	—	—	89

After ruling at excessively low levels for a period of five years, prices on the world market have shown an appreciable rise during the past year. Unfortunately these increases have to a very large extent been offset by increased freight rates. Government assistance to the maize producer in the Union had, therefore, to be maintained during the past year, and the Maize Quota Act, together with the guarantee for the redemption of excess certificates, which had been suspended in 1936, had to be re-introduced in order to ensure reasonable prices to the producer with the record crop harvested last year.

As part of the policy of control export surplus maize has been made available to drought-stricken areas at prices well below the normal internal price. In 1936 over 100,000 bags of maize were issued to farmers for stockfeeding purposes in drought-stricken areas, while another 30,000 bags were issued for human consumption to Natives in such areas. During the past year a total of 500,000 bags of maize were issued for stockfeeding purposes in drought-stricken areas.

It is felt that the future stability of the maize industry, like that of other crops, must be sought in the local consumption of the entire crop. With this object in view the different branches of the livestock industry are being improved at a rapid pace.

4. THE WHEAT CONTROL BOARD.

For strategic and other purposes it is a cardinal point of Government policy to render the Union as far as possible self-reliant in regard to essential foodstuffs and raw materials. In accordance with this policy wheat production in the Union has

been encouraged under the protection of import duties, since owing to low yields and uncertain weather conditions, the cost of production of wheat in the Union is higher than in most wheat exporting countries.

As a result of the protection accorded the wheat industry in terms of Act No. 32 of 1930, the production of wheat in the Union grew rapidly as the following figures show:—

1911	1,810,000	bags.
1918	3,044,000	„
1928	2,230,000	„
1929	3,280,000	„
1930	2,789,000	„
1931	4,114,000	„
1935	6,900,000	„
1936	4,626,000	„
1937	3,049,000	„

The marked influence which climatic conditions have on the wheat crop is clearly illustrated in the above figures. From a record crop of nearly 7 million bags in 1935, it fell away to 3 million for the present season's crop. These fluctuations in the quantity of wheat produced annually, led to the establishment of the Wheat Control Board under Act of Parliament in 1935, for the purpose of arranging for a carry-over of wheat from surplus years to deficit years. By agreement with co-operative societies and producers for storing the surplus wheat the Board has succeeded in stabilising the position very materially, especially from the point of view of the producer, but it has no power to fix prices. At the same time prices, until the last two or three months when exceptional conditions have prevailed, have been lower than before the establishment of the Board, as the following figures show:—

	Index of Wholesale Price of Wheat. 1927-29=100.	Indices of Retail Prices.	
		Flour per 25 lbs. 1929=100.	Bread per lb. 1929=100.
1930.. .. .	85	96	97
1931.. .. .	90	94	96
1932.. .. .	87	91	94
1933.. .. .	74	87	88
1934.. .. .	88	87	89
1935.. .. .	77	87	88
1936 (a)	68	86	88
1937.. .. .	70	86	88
1937, July	70	86	88
October	70	86	88
December	—	88	90
1938, January	94	91	91
	—	—	—

(a) Control established.

CONCLUSION:

This review has shown that during the depression the Government was faced with an exceptional and difficult problem in regard to the prices of agricultural products. All over the world these prices fell to a disastrously low level. The Government was faced with the question whether it could leave the ordinary machinery of supply and demand to settle the problem. To have done so, would have resulted in a great many producers being bankrupted. To have stood by under such circumstances, and allow the problem to work itself out in this way would not only have affected producers disastrously, but the effects of such a policy would have spread in ever-widening circles, starting with the farmers and gradually spreading to their creditors, to the commercial community and the industrialists.

A large measure of control was necessary to prevent such a process of social disintegration, and only in the sense that, under such circumstances, this prevented prices from falling to as low a level as otherwise they might, can it be alleged that control has kept prices up. It has been shown clearly that, except where drought conditions prevail, the present level of agricultural prices is still materially lower than the level which ruled before the depression. It should not be forgotten that the levels of wages now ruling in South Africa were generally fixed on the basis of

the pre-depression prices. It must therefore be clear that where the public now complain of rising cost of living, their complaint postulates the continuance of the low level of prices which, notwithstanding the control measures, the farmers received during the depression.

It must, however, be recognized that South African farming cannot be expected to carry on on the basis of depression prices. It could only be continued on this basis at the expense of the taxpayer, and this is out of the question as a permanent policy.

The criticism which has been levelled against control boards and the control board system is, therefore, not justified, and arises from a lack of a proper appreciation of the aims and objects of the Marketing Act. These may be briefly summarised as follows:—

- (a) Once more to foster the spirit of independence amongst farmers by enabling them to help themselves instead of continually applying to the Government for assistance;
- (b) the proper organisation of marketing and the efficient and economic distribution and stabilisation of prices; the ultimate aim being to reduce the margin between the price to the consumer and the price to the producer.

APPENDIX TABLE I.

INDICES OF ALL COMMODITY AND AGRICULTURAL WHOLESALE PRICES.

	All Commodity Wholesale Price Index.	Agricultural Index.
1927-29	100	100
30	86	68
31	83	63
32	76	51
33	78	67
34	85	77
35	79	66
36	82	77
37	84	81
1937, January	84	81
April	82	81
July	84	80
October	86	81
December	—	86
1938, January	89	—

(Monthly indices corrected for seasonal variation.)

APPENDIX TABLE II.

INDICES OF WHOLESALE OR MARKET PRICES OF IMPORTANT AGRICULTURAL FOOD PRODUCTS.

	Wheat.	Maize.	Butter.	Eggs.	Beef.	Bacon.	Mutton.
1927-29 ..	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
1929.. ..	92	99	96	93	104	109	96
1930.. ..	85	60	74	84	96	80	75
1931.. ..	90	60	74	75	89	68	62
1932.. ..	87	51	61	57	64	58	53
1933.. ..	74	76	70	66	79	75	82
1934.. ..	88	82	70	84	89	95	113
1935.. ..	77	60	61	66	86	75	96
1936.. ..	68	91	70	62	93	69	93
1937.. ..	70	75	70	66	104	66	104
1937, Jan. ..	70 69*	87 98*	65 61*	60 53*	81 89*	57 63*	93* 99*
Apr. .. .	70 68	68 77	70 65	66 101	104 89	66 61	92 93
July .. .	70 71	71 65	74 74	78 62	81 79	61 61	101 105
Oct. .. .	70 71	74 68	74 78	67 44	115 136	57 55	106 110
Dec. .. .	— —	89 87	— —	88 62	138 143	85 90	127 122
1938, Jan. ..	94 93	80 91	83 78	70 62	129 139	89 98	110 117

* Denotes index figures for which seasonal trend has not been eliminated.
The monthly index figures in the continuous column have been corrected for seasonal trend.

	Butterfat.	Onions.	Potatoes.	Grapes.	Apples.	Oranges (Navel).
1927-29	100	100	100	100	100	100
1929	95	82	86	83	83	95
1930	74	74	66	83	87	75
1931	68	99	95	82	80	66
1932	58	53	63	51	83	72
1933	74	58	91	60	80	69
1934	68	103	70	63	76	61
1935	58	58	70	68	87	66
1936	59	49	71	66	83	66
1937	71 --	113 --	73 --	69 --	90 --	58 --
1937, Jan.	56 53*	104 59*	42 40*	66 72*	86 43*	59 58*
April	56 53	88 173	57 45	72 69	88 176	54 55
July	75 79	111 127	73 182	-- --	88 105	55 49
October	90 95	107 160	82 103	-- --	88 34	61 66
December	94 89	225 50	136 19	61 61	-- --	-- --
1938, January	83 79	181 102	82 77	60 65	114 58	-- --

* Denotes index figures for which seasonal trend has *not* been eliminated.
The monthly index figures in the continuous column have been corrected for seasonal trend.

All this assistance will contribute greatly towards better means of conserving the fertility of farmers' fields and orchards, and of maintaining animals in healthy condition.

Inland farmers often have to pay heavy transportation charges on various packing materials they must get before they can market their products. Thus a rebate of 50% of the railage on wool packs and grain bags, and of 20% on box wood needed by producers of citrus and deciduous fruits is proposed.

The great value of the Railway Administration's road motor service to areas off the beaten track is generally realized—as also the fact that, commercially, it is more costly than a railway service. But it is the distant farmer for whom cheaper transport has the greatest value. For this reason it has been decided that the Central Government will refund to the Railway Administration the cost of considerable rebates, within the Union, in the road motor transport rates for several important farm products and farming requirements, by which means it is hoped to bring the nett price the farmers will have to pay closer to the rates on branch lines.

Briefly re-stated, it is the intention of the Central Government and of the Railway Administration to extend enormously the principle, already accepted, of granting to farmers rebates of railway charges they are paying in connection with the production and marketing side of their business, and by this means providing valuable help to agriculture. In addition to the present cost of such rebates amounting to £360,000, it is proposed to provide a further £1,200,000, to be borne in an agreed proportion by the Departments of Finance and of Railways.

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