

*Agricultural Products Board*

arguing the question as to whether you are in favour of bulk buying or not. There are certain countries that will not buy in any other way; and if you want to sell to them, you are going to sell in bulk or not at all. It just so happens that one of those countries is one to which we are most anxious to sell. Under the new government there we do not know whether they are going to pursue that policy. We know, however, that under the government that has just gone out they pursued that policy. One of their contracts is a meat contract with Australia for fifteen years. Of course, the question arises with those who are in authority now: What are we going to do about that contract? It is there; and there are other contracts ranging from that fifteen years down to four years. The only relationship that this board has to that situation is that the British had already indicated to us, before the change in government, and that representation has been continued since: "Would the government be prepared to buy farm products for us in Canada if we were to ask them to do so?" In so far as this measure is concerned, all we have said is: We have a board that can do that, if you want it done. That is what it really means. If they came to us and said: We want to buy certain things, we wish to buy them in Canada but we do not wish to go to the trade and we would like to have the government buy them, we will say: This board can buy them for you.

But under this legislation we do not intend to go into the business of buying farm products and selling them. That is not the intention at all. The intention is simply to have there a board which, when there is a job of that kind to be done, can do it.

In order to indicate that is the position, I would call attention to the fact that there is in this bill few of the powers that we had in the legislation, or even in the orders in council, under the War Measures Act, which made it possible for us to set up the dairy products board, the meat board and the special products board. Under either the orders in council or the legislation at that time we had authority to go and take the product out of the packing houses or even to go and take the product off the farms. We did not exercise the right to go and take it off the farms but we did exercise the right to go and take it out of the packing houses, and we exercised the right to take cheese out of storage and all that kind of thing. None of that authority is given to this board. It has none of those rights because, under our constitution, in peacetime we have no right to give to a board that kind of authority.

All we are saying in connection with this act is that where, for one reason or another,

[Mr. Gardiner.]

it is necessary, this may be done. There may be a dozen different reasons; the only one we have felt it necessary to act upon up to the moment is that which necessitated buying some butter outside Canada, and this board is doing that on instructions from the government. Other circumstances could arise. I am not going to try to guess at what they are.

In order to answer the question that was just raised as to whether the board should have farmer representation on it, I am only going to answer with the same answer as I gave at the time we were setting up the original board to deal with agricultural floor prices or what is properly known as the Agricultural Prices Support Act. We were then asked to put on that board representatives of the producers. I took that matter to the Canadian Federation of Agriculture and I asked them which they would prefer to have, the chairmanship of that board or representation on an advisory committee. We were quite prepared to appoint their president, Mr. Hannam—and he is still their president—chairman of the board. They took that matter back to their board and discussed it, and they told us that they much preferred to be represented on an advisory committee and not on the board that was doing the job. They said much the same as was said here by one of the members a few minutes ago—I think it was the hon. member for Selkirk (Mr. Bryce)—or as was implied by him in what he said, namely that if you put, let us say, Mr. Hannam on the board, and he remains there for five or ten years, people will start to say that he is not a farmer at all but that he is just a government employee. That is what would be said, because that is what has been said about every person who has been put on and kept on boards. The federation made the choice. They said: Set up an advisory committee and give us representation on it; make it possible for that committee to be called together at their request from time to time; we would much rather have that than have a member on the board. That is the way we have been operating. Mr. Hannam is the chairman of this advisory committee. He was made chairman because he was the president of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture. They have been allowed to nominate nine, I think it is, out of the sixteen members of the committee. Then the provinces have been allowed to nominate members. The result is that by far the greater number of those who are on the committee are deputy ministers from the provinces or representatives of farm organizations across the country. Every time they have indicated a desire to be called in here—and they indicate it through the chairman, Mr. Hannam—they have been called in. They have set a date