

Agricultural Products Board

or after, whichever is preferred. It appears that it is preferred by some that it be made before.

In suggesting that the authority be given to introduce the resolution for the purpose outlined I should like to make the following statement:

During the war three boards were set up to handle the sale from government to government of food products. There was the meat board set up to administer the agreements between Canada and Britain for sale and delivery of meat products; the dairy products board to administer similar agreements for sale and delivery of cheese; and the special products board to administer agreements for the sale and delivery of other agricultural products. These agreements were entered into and boards established under the War Measures Act.

Following the war an act cited as the Agricultural Products Act was passed in 1947 providing authority to continue the boards with similar powers through the transition period. This act was enacted annually until March 31, 1951, when it was allowed to expire.

The terms of these acts which required the authority provided under the War Measures Act or the National Emergency Transitional Powers Act of 1945 were those which gave powers to the boards in periods of war or emergency which in ordinary times could not be conferred by this parliament.

Those powers had to do mostly with compulsory delivery. It is not intended to confer such powers upon the board being set up by the terms of the proposed bill.

The proposed bill will set up one board composed of persons employed in the different branches of the department which are concerned to purchase and sell farm products. The board will have no authority to compel delivery of a product produced on the farms of Canada. It will only receive the product when the price offered in a competitive market results in its delivery.

The boards set up under the Agricultural Products Act of 1947 served as an agency for the agricultural prices support board in the purchase and sale of commodities under price support programs. When this act was rescinded it was necessary to set up a legally constituted authority to undertake this service.

When it was decided to purchase butter to make possible the carrying out of the effort being made to stabilize the price of butter it was necessary to set up a legally constituted authority to undertake the service.

We have been approached from time to time by other governments to provide an

[Mr. Gardiner.]

agency to purchase certain farm products for them in Canada. If it were decided by the government to perform this service it would be necessary to have a legally constituted board.

The government did by order in council 3415 under the Emergency Powers Act set up such a board. It is considered that such a board is necessary to the proper administration of the policies of the department apart from any emergency which may exist, and therefore it was thought proper to have special legislation setting up such a board.

In other words, we have the board set up at present under order in council under the emergency act passed last session; but it is thought proper to have that board constituted under legislation passed by this house in order to provide for the carrying out of other objectives which may not be caused by an emergency, to have this legislation properly set up at this session.

The board provided for will have power to buy and sell agricultural products when an order in council has been passed authorizing the minister to instruct them to do so. In other words, it is not a general power given to the board to go out and buy farm products, but any time that the government determines that it is necessary for farm products to be purchased, either because of activities under the Agricultural Prices Support Act, or because we have been asked to undertake that service to Britain or to some other country that desires to buy food in this country, or when it has been found advisable to buy food in this country for any purpose whatsoever to be utilized probably within the country, this board will be available in order to make these purchases.

Mr. J. A. Charlton (Brant-Wentworth): I was glad to hear the minister's statement in which he said there is not going to be any compulsion about this bill. It is not my intention to take up much of the time of the house on this occasion or to oppose the resolution at this stage. It was my privilege last session to point out to the government the necessity for this legislation in the speech that I made on the budget. I quote from page 2286 of *Hansard* of April 23:

The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner) stated that the four and a half million pounds of New Zealand butter was laid down at Halifax for 40½ cents per pound and sold for 56½, resulting in a profit of at least a million dollars which the government should have had in view of the maintained floor price of 53 cents. The government in effect subsidized a good share of that very juicy profit. In cases where a floor price is being maintained on any product and a short position is encountered, then the government itself, under such conditions, should import a sufficient quantity to satisfy domestic demand.