

*Marketing Act*

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: The amendment to section 16 is carried, but not the section as amended. One point I should like to draw to the attention of the minister is this: At the moment everything in connection with investigation rests on the initiative of the minister. The terms of the section are now quite wide, and under it the minister can investigate anything. I do not take exception to that, because I believe that if he wished it, the minister would have that power anyway. I do think, however, that there is a real possibility of the section as it stands being used to work a certain amount of injury on individuals, as a result of political pressure if it is to be used at all by the ministry. I do not make this statement in an offensive manner, and I make it as being applicable to any ministry at any time. My statement is that if by statute you leave in the hands of a ministry the making of investigations into anything, and you do not surround that authority by any kind of precaution as to the basis upon which the investigation is to be made, or anything of that kind, there will be perpetual pressure brought to bear upon the ministry to investigate anything and everything anywhere and everywhere and a ministry might conceivably see to it that where its friends were concerned there would be no investigation, but where opponents were concerned there would be speedy and possibly vexatious investigation. That is the danger in all such legislation, and I suggest there ought to be some kind of safeguard thrown around the matter of inquiry which would at least stipulate that investigations should be made as the result of representations by some parties who will state that they have some kind of reason for believing that matters ought to be investigated. If it is to be left entirely to the initiative of the ministry, it is almost a foregone conclusion that such initiative will be exercised at the instance of political friends against political opponents. If a minister wished to be partisan, that would be the inevitable result. In order to overcome such a difficulty, there should be at least a clause which would state that the investigation was to be on the representation of some group properly representative, and as a result of their having shown cause why investigation should be made by the ministry. But certainly if it is left in the way it now stands, whereby the initiative either to give or to withhold an investigation lies wholly with the minister, and there is no opportunity for other parties to secure investigation except at the will of the ministry, I am afraid the provision

[Mr. Cooté.]

will become a huge political weapon. I am afraid, as a consequence, the provision will have very little effect, except to achieve the ends I have described.

Mr. WEIR (Melfort): If the right hon. gentleman's contention is correct, that the provision could be used as a political weapon, in the event of a minister desiring so to use it, I feel the right hon. gentleman would agree that there would be no great difficulty in getting five or six people belonging to any party to make such recommendation. I realize that there is a good deal of truth in what the right hon. gentleman has said, but I do not see how the section could be qualified.

The CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bury): Shall the section as amended carry?

Section agreed to.

On section 17—Committee to deal with spread.

Mr. GUTHRIE: The hon. member for Comox-Alberni has suggested that we insert after the word "consumers" in the forty-second line the words "of a natural or regulated product." I think it would be better to amend it in another way. The first subsection of section 17 gives the minister power to appoint a committee. He may, at the request of the board, or on his own initiative, appoint a committee to inquire into the spread in connection with the marketing, adaptation for sale, processing or conversion of a regulated product. That would mean a natural or regulated product. Then, subsection 2 should begin with the words "such committee," and thereby we would avoid any further amendment. Subsection 2 would then read:

(2) Such committee shall be composed of such number of representatives of producers and persons engaged in marketing, adaptation for sale, processing or conversion, and consumers.

And so on. The committee is limited to inquire into some natural or regulated product.

Mr. NEILL: Yes, the committee would be limited in the scope of their inquiry, but their selection would not be limited to people connected with the trade. There might be an investigation in connection with sugar beet production, and it might be possible to appoint coal miners to do the investigating. I agree with the introduction of the word "such," but I think it should also contain my suggestion as well. The section does not state that the committee shall be composed