

Mr. WRIGHT: The manifesto reads:

Encouragement of producers' and consumers' cooperatives; the restoration and maintenance of an equitable relationship between prices of agricultural products and those of other commodities and services; and improving the efficiency of export trade in farm products.

And later on:

The substitution for the present system of foreign trade, of a system of import and export boards to improve the efficiency of overseas marketing, to control prices, and to integrate the foreign trade policy with the requirements of the national economic plan.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): That is pretty general; you could drive a coach and four through that.

Mr. WRIGHT: It is not any more general than this bill. Section 9, subsection 1, paragraph (g) reads:

to purchase at market or contract prices and export any agricultural product under any contract between His Majesty in right of Canada and any other government or agency thereof and to do all things necessarily incidental thereto;

I think the principle of export boards for agricultural products is a sound one. It is a principle which will have to be followed if we are to stabilize the prices of agricultural products not only in Canada but throughout the world. As the minister has stated, there have been tremendous fluctuations. These fluctuations have been caused not only by differences in production from year to year but by the results of speculative marketing. When there has been a surplus in a certain season of the year or in certain years these speculators have been able to come in and buy up the surplus at low prices, which forces down the prices, store or process it and then reap the reward later on. I think the government should endeavour to have this board take the place of the speculative markets which have formerly controlled the prices of agricultural products. That should be one of the objectives of this board.

The minister has stated that the board is to consist of three members. He says that he proposes to appoint a chairman immediately and to have two men from the department assist him until the board starts to function. The board in the meantime is to gather statistics. I agree with the minister so far as the immediate appointment of a chairman is concerned, but I believe the other two members should also be appointed immediately. One of these should represent the consumers of Canada and the other the producers. There should be a secretariat set up to gather these facts and figures and place them not only before the chairman of the

[Mr. Gardiner.]

board but before the consumers and the producers of the country through their representatives. I think the board would be more efficient if that were done than simply to appoint a permanent chairman at this time and appoint the other two members temporarily.

The commodity boards to be set up under this legislation should be controlled by the producers, by the cooperatives which have been set up in various sections. I realize that agriculture is perhaps not sufficiently well organized to be able to appoint all the commodity boards, but it is well enough organized to appoint a great many of them. With proper encouragement and education by the government, these cooperative organizations should handle this phase of the matter for the government. I make this suggestion because I think it is important that these commodity boards should be representative of the producers of Canada. They can be representative of the producers of Canada only if the producers are prepared to get together and organize their own cooperatives. I suggest what I have suggested before, that this be taken into consideration and where cooperative organizations exist, and they do in some cases, they should be used as the commodity boards to handle particular products.

As the minister has stated, the necessity for this bill is due largely to the fact that we have had ceiling prices. The figures placed on the record by the minister show quite clearly that during the last war and eighteen months thereafter, when there were no ceiling prices, the prices of agricultural products rose much higher than they were allowed to rise during this war. Because ceiling prices have been placed on agricultural production it is only fair that there should be floor prices during the transition period.

We all know that when price ceilings were first established in 1941 the ceiling prices of agricultural products were too low. It was only after organized agriculture had made representations to the government time and time again that the ceiling prices were raised to a point where they were on a par with other ceiling prices. Therefore agriculture has something coming to it because of the ceiling prices established in 1941. If this legislation is used properly it should take into consideration some of the differences which existed in the early years of the war.

I do not think this board will be able to operate successfully if we continue to permit speculative markets in Canada. It is only by taking the selling of agricultural products from the speculative markets that we can