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PACKING AND SALE OF STAPLE COMMODITIES.

Bill (No. 155) respecting the administration of an Act respecting the packing and sale of certain staple commodities.—Sir Wilfrid Laurier—was read the second time, and House went into committee thereon.

On section 1,

Hon. SYDNEY FISHER (Minister of Agriculture). Section 8 of the Act to be amended says :

The Governor in Council may assign the administration of this Act to such member of the King's Privy Council for Canada as he sees fit, and may make such regulations as are deemed necessary for the proper working of this Act.

A portion of this Act is in regard to fruit packing. Under the Fruit Marks Act, the Department of Agriculture has a staff of inspectors to deal with fruit marks and we thought it better and more convenient that they should also deal with the administration of the fruit packing. We therefore desire to have the power to transfer to the Department of Agriculture the administration of that part of this Act which deals with fruit packages. The administration of the rest of the Act remains in the Department of Trade and Commerce. As the law now stands only the whole of the Act can be allotted to any one department, but by the amendment a portion of the Act can be so allotted.

Mr. HENDERSON. This amendment will transfer the administration of this particular Act respecting the sale of certain commodities, absolutely from the Department of Trade and Commerce to the Department of Agriculture ?

Mr. FISHER. No ; the present law covers a number of things such as the size and weight of certain measures, standard of weights, the size of packages of salt and registered trade marks, and it also refers to apple packages and the size of fruit packages. The intention of the amendment is to transfer by Order in Council to the Department of Agriculture, the administration in regard to fruit packages, but it does not deal with any of the other matters. This is done for the convenience of utilizing the inspectors under the Fruit Marks Act to administer the law in respect to the size of fruit packages.

Mr. HENDERSON. I am under the disadvantage of not having a copy of the Bill before me, but I understand that the Act or any part of it can be transferred to the Department of Agriculture.

Mr. FISHER.

Mr. FISHER. The present law authorizes the administration of the whole Act being put under any minister, and the amendment allows any portion of the Act to be put in charge of a minister as well as the whole Act.

Mr. HENDERSON. The administration of the law as regards the matters referred to in this Bill is now under the Department of Trade and Commerce, and the amendment will authorize the Governor in Council to transfer the administration of that Act entirely to the Department of Agriculture ?

Mr. FISHER. The present law allows the administration of the whole Act to be transferred to any minister, and as a matter of fact an Order in Council has been passed entrusting its administration to the Minister of Trade and Commerce. There is no desire to put the administration of the whole Act under any other minister, but we think it better to put the fruit inspection under the control of the Minister of Agriculture so that his officers who are doing similar work may be enabled to do this work. It just happens that although the whole administration might be transferred to another minister, a portion of it cannot be, and we want to have the power to transfer a portion without transferring the whole.

Mr. HENDERSON. But the power to transfer a portion gives the power to transfer the whole.

Mr. FISHER. We have that already.

Mr. HENDERSON. I have noticed from time to time the tendency of the Minister of Agriculture to practically take away from the other departments matters which properly belong to them and to overload his own department. We have had an example to-day when the Minister of Agriculture presumed to answer for the Minister of Marine and Fisheries and the Minister of War. That was referred to prominently last session, when the hon. gentleman was acting for the Minister of War. To-day he is answering for the Minister of Militia and Marine. I think the great agricultural interests of this country demand that the Department of Agriculture should not be overloaded with every other conceivable thing, detracting from the time which the minister should devote strictly to the interests of the farming community. We know that large interests pertaining to agriculture have been neglected. Last year that was prominently brought out in regard to transportation, when it was shown that the Minister of Agriculture or some other minister had neglected to see that the people of Canada got as fair rates by shipping from a Canadian port on lines which had been largely subsidized by the parliament of Canada, as were obtainable on the same class of goods shipped through American