

Agricultural Products Board

that has come to us from provincial authorities, or from authorities in some other country as to what the position is.

We have had an understanding from the beginning that while these discussions are on a great many things may be said on both sides that should not be spread indiscriminately around the country. We could not give it if it were going to be spread around the country, and they would not be in a position to advise if they did not have all the facts. I must say that over the years, I think beginning back about 1944, down to the present, there has never been an occasion that I know of when anyone came out of that committee and said anything they should not have said, and that is a rather remarkable experience. I think they will agree too that no member of the departmental staffs, including myself, has gone out and repeated anything that they have said, that they might, after getting all the facts, have thought that probably it would have been just as wise not to have said. The committee is not conducted in that way. They all sit down behind closed doors for the time being, and do discuss the whole matter, and it is fully understood that the decisions which have been reached there, and the information that they are finally given by the government after the discussions—at the end of these considerations I come back and discuss the matter with them after they have spent two or three days in threshing out all the questions that they think should be threshed out—they have put their representations in front of me and I go over each one of them and tell them pretty well what I think can be done in the circumstances, or what may be done. They then are in a position to advise either their provincial governments or the farm organizations they represent as to what the position is. That is the principle on which we operate. It has not been said to anybody: "You must not say this, or you must not say that". There is a general understanding that we think we know one another's point of view on it, and we think we know when something has been said that other people would perhaps prefer not to have repeated as having come from them directly. Therefore we do not repeat them. That is the only sense in which there is any restriction.

Mr. Charlton: Just a word, but before I say that I do wish to say that I appreciate the assurance the minister gave this morning—at least I thought he did, if I heard him correctly—that this board would not in any way interfere with the producers' boards now in existence or organized in the future.

Mr. Gardiner: That is correct.

Mr. Charlton: He did make that statement, and I thank him for it.

With regard to section 3, I should like to say a word on subsection 6. It has been quite apparent in the last few years that the government does want to take away from the civil service commission the right to hire men and fix salaries. In view of the fact that number 7 is here, that the members of the board, as I understood the minister to say, were now civil servants in his department, I see no reason for number 6 being there. I think it should be deleted. It changes all the principles of the Civil Service Act as it now stands. I do not believe in the principle that the governor in council should have the privilege of picking men and giving them jobs and setting their salaries, all outside the Civil Service Act.

Mr. Gardiner: There is only one reason for continuing it in the bill, and I think it is a good one. We have no reason at the moment for thinking that there should be anyone on the board who is outside the civil service. There is always the possibility that there might be some product to be dealt with that is not a product over which we have sufficient control to be able to feel that our officials should handle it. We may desire to go outside to some farm organization that really has control over the product. Just by way of illustration—I may be introducing something with which I may be confronted later and asked to appoint someone. A question was raised just a few moments ago by an hon. member from Prince Edward Island with regard to furs. There is just a possibility that if someone were to say to us: "We would like this board to buy furs", we might not think we had anyone in the department capable of handling that matter, and we might ask somebody to sit down with the board to deal with that. In that case we would want to provide for some payment. That is the only reason it is there. In addition to that we may have it develop into a sufficiently onerous job to be giving to some official in the department far more work than he should be asked to carry without any additional pay. Then there might be something added to the pay he is receiving. I think the section should stay there to deal with these matters, but I can assure the hon. member that I will not be able to get any considerable payment for any of those who are already on the civil service staff past some of my friends, including the Minister of Finance.