

Canadian Commercial Corporation

Mr. Howe: No! We do it every day. I did it just the other day. You cannot buy otherwise.

Mr. Knowles: The minister is very nonchalant about this thing. He is a great businessman, a great organizer, but he does find parliament an awful nuisance, doesn't he?

Mr. Howe: No, no.

Mr. Pearkes: Before the house moved into committee the minister did say this was a purchasing agency, not a construction agency.

Mr. Howe: Yes.

Mr. Pearkes: There is some justification for misunderstanding in that respect, because the amendment assented to on July 17, 1947, makes reference to constructing and carrying out projects as required by the Department of National Defence. I understand that no construction work has been done by the C.C.C., and that any projects which have been carried out for the Department of National Defence have been through the letting of contracts to some outside firms.

Mr. Howe: That is right.

Mr. Pearkes: I understand that policy is now to be discontinued, and that the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation will carry out those duties. Would the minister consider amending that amendment, eliminating the words "construct and carry out projects"? That was the expression to which I objected in 1947. I think it is unsound, and that the present policy where you have a central department doing all construction work is the sound one. If I remember correctly, the explanation of that paragraph given a year ago when the bill was presented referred even to the possible construction of fortifications.

I believe that is wrong in principle, and if it could be removed from the text there would be no doubt in the minds of people as to the correct functions of this purchasing agency.

Mr. Thatcher: I have one suggestion which seems feasible to me. My understanding is that today this corporation does business only when some private company or foreign state approaches it. Why would it not be feasible to use the corporation when we have surplus primary products? For instance, I understand that today our apple-growers in British Columbia and Nova Scotia are facing disaster. Why could not this corporation try to arrange barter agreements with some other state, whereby it would take the produce received in return for the apples and sell it in Canada? There may be some reason why it cannot be done, but at the moment it is not clear to me. And if in the future other agricultural

products are in surplus supply it could perform a useful function at that time.

Mr. Howe: I would not want the hon. member to see disaster on all sides; I can assure him the apple crop of British Columbia has been largely sold, and at a good price.

Mr. Thatcher: How about Nova Scotia?

Mr. Howe: There is in Nova Scotia a surplus of a certain quality of apple not marketable in this country. Britain has said it does not want them—would not even take them as a gift. We offered to give Britain certain apples. What can you get in barter for something which people will not take as a gift?

Mr. Thatcher: If the corporation, on its own initiative, would try to search the world for markets, I should think we would get results. That is why we have a dominion corporation of this kind. I do not see why it should not try.

Mr. Howe: It is exactly for that purpose that the Department of Trade and Commerce has trade commissioners in every country of the world searching for markets.

Mr. Fulton: With respect to stockpiling, if it is decided to obtain certain commodities for that purpose, do I understand that the \$12,500,000 which will be available if this amendment passes would be used for that purpose, and that later provision would be made in the estimates to repay an equivalent amount? Or will a general item be inserted in the estimates to provide for an estimated amount to be spent for stockpiling in the coming year, and that amount drawn on from time to time as necessary?

Mr. Howe: We hope the latter procedure will be possible. As my hon. friend knows, conditions arise, such as threatened trouble in Malaya, which might easily have cut off our supply of tin, and which may make it necessary to take on commitments without the authority of parliament, in the belief that under the circumstances parliament would be sure to give approval when the time comes. But ordinarily we will anticipate the action and provide for it in advance, rather than ask Canadian Commercial Corporation to finance it.

Mr. Fulton: Do I understand the minister to say that the only material stock pile thus far is that of tin?

Mr. Howe: Yes; I believe, though, that there are orders out for one or two other materials which may be provided for later.

Mr. Fulton: The details will be included in the estimates?

Mr. Howe: Yes.