

peg market and farmers burning it in their furnaces rather than coal because they could not afford to pay for it. The board may package, process, store, ship, transport, export or insure any agricultural product. It may enter into contracts or appoint agents to do anything authorized under this act. Apparently these agents may enter into agreements with other governments and purchase at the request of any department of the government supplies that are required. It has the right to appoint commodity boards or other agents to undertake the purchase and the disposition of agricultural products. In fact the whole agricultural industry, the processing and distribution of goods in this country, comes immediately and completely under the control of this board. They have within their hands the fate of agriculture; they have the fate of the Canadian people in their hands with regard to whether or not the people are to be able to purchase the necessary nutrition. In the hands of the proper people this can be a very valuable board. In the hands of the wrong people it will actually be dangerous.

I am asking everybody to study this bill carefully and notice the powers. It is of most vital importance that the people of Canada see that the right people are in control of the boards that have so much of the welfare of so many people within their power.

Mr. W. G. WEIR (Macdonald): I should like to say a word or two with respect to the present measure, which is an act to provide a revolving fund of two hundred million dollars to assist in the matter of adjusting farm prices through the transition period following the war. I think it is reasonable that the farm people of this country and our general economy should expect to have some governmental assistance where necessary in the interests of this country during that time. I say that particularly for the reason that we as a government and as a country have during the period of the war instituted price ceilings. If the one was necessary for the general interest of the country on the one hand, it is reasonable to suggest that the other is equally necessary in the period during the transition after the war.

The measure provides for the appointment of a board, the functions of which were outlined by the minister this morning. As I understand it, the board is to operate in two ways, one by establishing the price at which the board may take over goods and market them, and the other by establishing a price and letting the market function, and pay the difference between what is deemed to be a

fair price, or whatever price is decided upon, and the general price. I have not thought my way through as to exactly how that would work out, but I suggest that here is the place where our cooperative movements can be of real assistance. I hope that their machinery and organization can be brought into play in much of this marketing organization, particularly in carrying out the purposes of this measure. If we are to try to devise a price structure that is to carry on from year to year, the cooperative organizations in themselves will provide a very good type of machinery for doing that very thing. I am not suggesting that the state should enter into the picture in the sense of being similar to a cooperative organization, because I submit that from the point of view of competitive activity, of judging the merits or the demerits of an organization, there is a healthy balance to be achieved between well-established business organizations working in competition with cooperative organizations; and from these types of organizations I think in actual practice we can get the very best possible results.

Many have expressed a great deal of fear with respect to agriculture in this transition period. There is one aspect of the present agricultural situation—which will be of particular importance during the period of transition from war to peace—that is entirely different from the condition that prevailed during the last war. I believe that one of the greatest difficulties that agriculture suffered from in the last war was the inflated prices of land and the creation of debt which many farmers experienced. That situation is now entirely reversed. Farmers generally have been paying off debts to a very creditable degree. That being so, their position is much healthier to meet the period of transition at the close of this war than it was in the last war.

One other aspect of the price situation which should be kept in mind is efficiency of production and of marketing. It is not sound policy for us to devise a price structure in this country which will leave opportunity for careless management or keep sub-marginal lands or units of operation that are not economical in operation. Therefore the board when established must have due regard for efficiency of and economy in operation so far as the production of agricultural products is concerned. I believe that will be kept in mind.

On the question of parity prices which has been urged on many occasions by hon. members in this house, I hope that the idea does not get abroad that we should attempt to maintain throughout what is looked upon as