

Canadian Wheat Board

cannot read anybody's mind. I can only take the bill for what it is worth. We could go on discussing this for days, and I sincerely believe that it is our duty to have the officials of the board appear before a committee where they could be examined and give us the benefit of their experience. Then we could find out how they have been acting with respect to this section and how it has been interpreted. But with the bill before the house this cannot be done and we have to depend on the explanatory notes attached to the bill.

I would respectfully submit that we should hear from the officials exactly what is meant, for instance, by marketing facilities. The amendment refers almost exclusively to the marketing agencies, and paragraph (i) provides that the only restriction shall apply to the selling and disposing of wheat. That is an involved question. Exactly what is meant by marketing agencies is not clear to me. I have tried to find out exactly what is meant by it, but it is quite debatable. It would appear that the facilities used by the board at the present time are numerous and diversified. For instance, the Canadian wheat board, is, I believe, now using the facilities of the country elevators, the small and large mills, the terminal elevators, the government elevators as well as the private elevators, the pools, the United Grain Growers Limited, the terminals owned by the national harbours board, and the brokerage facilities of the shippers and importers. There is no doubt that the question of storage facilities, handling facilities, purchasing facilities and marketing facilities is interrelated and in many instances very difficult to segregate. I do not believe it is the intention of this bill that the wheat board should go out and buy all the country elevators and put civil servants in every one of them to purchase the grain from the farmers, because, as I pointed out, the amendment refers more particularly to the selling and disposing of wheat. However, it must be remembered that the elevators are used at the present time to complete certain transactions of sale. For instance, I have in mind a country miller who buys wheat from the wheat board; this wheat often never leaves the community; it is bought there and sold to the miller right on the spot. In that case it could be argued that the elevator man has been used as a marketing agent. I am just pointing this out to show that the question is an intricate one, and a wrong policy might lead to serious consequences.

The allegation has also been made that large sums of money can be saved. Naturally

[Mr. Juras.]

when it comes to saving money I am 100 per cent in favour of the intent. However, there is always the danger that in trying to save money you may spend more than you actually save, especially when it has to do with setting up a large and cumbersome government agency or government organization.

I took the trouble to analyse the report of the Canadian wheat board. I have here the report of the board for the crop year 1943-44. This is the statement of operations on the crop account, western division, for the year ended July 31, 1944, and it is the last report, or at least the most recent I have. We find that the wheat acquired by the board amounted to 293,000,000 bushels, at a cost, in round figures, of \$354 million. The surplus on cash wheat transactions is shown as \$23 million. We now come to the expenses, and I bring these in with the object of trying to find exactly where we could save large sums of money. As I said before, if it can be done I am 100 per cent behind it, but before tinkering with this organization I should like to have some facts or figures on which to base a decision. In the report the expenses are given. The carrying charges are \$4,000,000. Other items are: additional freight on wheat, \$900,000; then, handling stop off division charges and so on, \$2,000; drying and reconditioning, \$19,000; brokerage charges, \$115,000; administration and general expenses, \$436,000, making a total of close to \$5,000,000. The largest item of expense is, of course, the carrying charges, and as hon. members know, this represents the storage of wheat carried at country elevators at a rate determined under the tariff of the Board of Grain Commissioners for Canada, plus haulage, and allowance for interest on the grain which is financed by the elevator company until it reaches the delivery point where it is turned over to the Canadian wheat board. The terminal storage rates are also fixed by the board of grain commissioners, and I believe the mill elevators take the rate that is nearest to the terminal elevators. So that I do not see how we could effect a big saving in this item of carrying charges. I have not been able to probe deeply into these items of brokerage charges and administrative and general expenses, but I would fancy that there is probably more than meets the eye in those items. If it is only \$115,000 which we could save by setting up a huge organization, I am quite sure that in the long run we would not save any money but that actually it would be more costly to the wheat board; and naturally, if it is costlier to the wheat board, eventually it will be costlier to the producer,