

Agricultural Products Board

Mr. Gardiner: That is all.

Section agreed to.

On section 2—*Definitions*.

Mr. McLure: Various products are set out in section 2. Will the minister state whether conservation furs come within the definition of "agricultural products". There is no mention made of them, and they are now under the prices support act.

Mr. Gardiner: In so far as we have assisted in the marketing of furs, they have been handled under the Agricultural Products Co-operative Marketing Act of 1939. Under that measure we have guaranteed accounts at the bank. The act permits us to guarantee the account of anyone who comes under that act up to 80 per cent of the average price of the preceding three years. In actual practice, I do not think the board has ever agreed to a price higher than 60 per cent of the average of the preceding three years. We did guarantee the price of furs up to a set amount in 1947-48, at which time we took a considerable loss. Speaking from memory, I think the proportion of the price at that time was somewhere between 40 and 50 per cent. Prices were so high during the latter part and at the end of the war that there was a loss on those furs. So far as I can recall, furs have been handled under that act, and are still handled under it.

Mr. McLure: I understood the minister to say the board took a loss, but the producer took a tremendous loss. It costs 50 per cent more to produce those furs today than it did in 1939 or 1940. The cost of everything, such as labour, food and so on, has caused that increase in the cost of production. No farm can produce today except at a loss, that is with the prices that are realized under this market support act. I thought if some changes were going to be made, consideration might be given to bringing this product under this act and treating it in a different manner from that in which it has been treated. The method now being followed is of no benefit whatever; in fact it is injurious to the trade.

Section agreed to.

On section 3—*Board established*.

Mr. Cardiff: When it is stated that the board will consist of not less than three and not more than seven, why is there not a definite number set out in the bill?

Mr. Gardiner: At the moment we think it is best that the three groups that were represented on the previous three boards should be represented on this board. In case we are dealing with a dairy product, we think a

[Mr. Blackmore.]

dairy man should be on; in case we are dealing with meat products, then we think a meat man should be on, and to keep all of them represented it requires seven.

Mr. Cardiff: In that event the minister can call in anybody he wishes.

Mr. Gardiner: Yes, or any part of it.

Mr. Wright: A little while ago when the minister discussed this matter he said he had discussed it with the Canadian Federation of Agriculture on a previous occasion, and they had indicated that they would prefer to be represented on the advisory board rather than on the main board itself. I should like to bring to the minister's attention a criticism that is frequently raised in the country, and I should like to know whether it is justified or not. The growers' representatives from the various farm organizations who are on this advisory board, and who sit in with the main board in discussing questions that may arise as to whether the product should be brought under the board or as to what the price is, are sometimes criticized. The criticism that I hear in the country is that, having sat in on the discussion, these men are not able to come back and freely express their views before their own organization, because their hands have been more or less tied by the fact that they have discussed the matter with the government. There is considerable criticism of members of some of these advisory boards by the growers themselves because of the fact they feel that their representatives have more or less tied themselves to a certain position and cannot come back and freely discuss that position with their growers or with the body whom they represent. Are these men who are on these advisory committees of the two boards in any way prevented, through being members of these advisory boards, from coming back to the producers and fully discussing their position on the advisory committee with regard to matters that may have been discussed between them and the government?

Mr. Gardiner: The committee is set up with a full understanding and in such a manner that the members are advisory not only to the department and through the department to the government, but they are intended to be advisory as from the department to farm organizations represented and the provincial government represented. What they expect me to do, and what I do, is to open the meeting and give them all the information that I can properly give them with regard to what we know about the marketing situation in different places, probably the information