

On section 16—Power to authorize investigations.

Mr. DUPRE: I beg to move an amendment the purport of which is to strike out the last three words in subsection 1, "any natural product," and substitute therefor the words "any regulated product."

Mr. POULIOT: Did the minister say he was moving that?

Mr. DUPRE: All we are doing is to strike out the words "any natural product" at the end of the subsection and substitute therefor the words "any regulated product."

Mr. POULIOT: The minister says that he moves that?

Mr. DUPRE: Yes.

Mr. POULIOT: If he moves then he is better than the Prime Minister (Mr. Bennett) who does not move at all.

Mr. HEAPS: Would the minister explain what will be the effect of this change?

Mr. WEIR (Melfort): "Regulated product" is the phrase used in every other place in the bill.

Mr. HEAPS: What is the effect of this change?

Mr. WEIR (Melfort): It is really to correct a clerical error.

Mr. NEILL: We have been told both in the house and in the press that the government are taking powers under this bill to go farther than the control of marketing; they are to have power to investigate spreads. It was suggested that these powers were not altogether disconnected with the revelations of the price spread committee. There is no reason why these powers should be restricted to regulated products. To all intents and purposes this part of the bill is a separate bill. We have been dealing with the marketing of natural products and we are now going into a totally different thing. The government has recognized this fact by making a different part to the bill. We are now going to deal with spreads, somewhat along the lines of the combines act, and there is no reason in the world why it should be confined to regulated products. Why not leave it as it is and have it cover any natural product? I think it would be a very retrograde step to confine it only to those articles or products which are the subject of regulation. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Woodsworth) suggested the other day that it should cover

[Mr. Pouliot.]

any product. I would not like to increase the scope of the bill to that extent but if we are to have investigations of spreads I think they should cover all natural products.

Mr. GARLAND (Bow River): From my present understanding of the section I am strongly inclined to agree with the hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Neill). A case occurs to me where there might be an efficiently functioning milk board. It might be found that in the case of an unregulated product, such as forage crops, alfalfa or something like that, the conditions were so chaotic as to lead to a possible disruption of the milk industry. The milk board might want to ask the minister to make an investigation of the price spreads in the forage industry and I see no reason why that should not be done. I do not think the minister would lose anything by leaving this section in its original form.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver): Is it the intention of the government to introduce further legislation?—because I think the effect of this amendment is to destroy the generality of this portion of the bill. In the interpretation section there are three exceptions to the definition of regulated product, and the amendment proposed to this section would destroy its effect.

Mr. WEIR (Melfort): In subsection (b), spread is defined with reference to any regulated product, and this amendment is to bring this section in conformity with section 15.

Mr. HEAPS: If this amendment is passed, would not it have the effect of restricting the operations of the bill?

Mr. WEIR (Melfort): Yes, somewhat.

Mr. HEAPS: It is very hard at the present moment to see to what extent this amendment is going to restrict the operation of the bill. From what the minister has said, it would appear that this is to apply to those products which are regulated and this bill will have nothing to say with regard to products which have not been approved by the minister or which are under schemes. It may be that there will be only one or two schemes approved and in that case all other products would be barred from any benefits, assuming that any benefits are going to accrue from this bill. If there is going to be any restriction, we might as well understand what it means. If it is not the intention of the government to restrict the operations of this measure, I think parliament and the country in general ought to know.