

When the Bill was in Committee of the Whole the Chairman gave an explanation which appears on page 553 of Hansard of June 15, and which reads as follows:

What section 8 means is that, provided the Governor in Council is satisfied that a majority of the producers of potatoes, say, in the Maritime Provinces, desire a central board, the three boards may be amalgamated. But, whether they were amalgamated or not, if the provinces did not agree the federal authority would have power to appoint a central board, provided a majority wanted it.

I wish to make the following observations. The soil and climate of Prince Edward Island appear to be very well adapted to the production of potatoes, and by reason of careful attention to seed, to cultivation and to grading, that province now produces, and has produced for some years past, a very superior article which commands a premium in the markets of Canada and the United States. What bothers me is this. If one board had jurisdiction over the marketing of potatoes of the Maritime Provinces, would there be a danger that we of Prince Edward Island might lose the excellent position we have achieved after some years of effort?

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: I am aware of the seed potato business, as I think it is called, in Prince Edward Island—

Hon. Mr. HUGHES: Seed and table stock.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN—and the excellent prices obtained because of the superiority of the article. Were the operation of this Bill to deny the higher price to the high-quality article, it would be unjust and indefensible; but I cannot see any danger of that in clause 8. That clause says:

Whenever the Governor in Council is satisfied, on the recommendation of the Minister, that a majority of the persons engaged in the production or marketing of a natural product so require, he may approve of a proposal.

A proposal has to be made. If there is evidence that it is the wish of the majority of the producers or marketers, a proposal may be adopted for the purpose of "the extension of the geographical limits of any part of Canada to which an existing scheme relates." If it is proposed, for example, to extend the limits of a scheme of potato production now in operation, by including the whole of New Brunswick, instead of only the lower half—I do not know whether in regard to potatoes there is any distinction between the two or not—it can be done under paragraph a. Paragraph b provides for the extension of the powers of any local board. Some of its powers may not be plenary, and these may be added to. Also,

Hon. Mr. HUGHES

if the Governor in Council is satisfied that the majority desire it, two or more local boards can be amalgamated. If he is satisfied that the majority desire the amalgamation of the two boards of Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, they can be amalgamated, and the amalgamated board will operate in future and will have full powers, so far as this Act can give them; and probably will have also full local powers as given by the provincial governments. There may be one board for the whole of the Maritime Provinces. But that does not mean that every potato marketed by that board will bring the same price as the rest. The objective of the board is to get the best price obtainable for all grades. Grading would certainly be continued. It is utterly inconceivable that the advantage due to high quality would ever be wiped out. You cannot preserve quality unless you preserve the extra price.

Hon. Mr. HUGHES: That is the point, and it is very important.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: It is very important. That is the fact. I do not know that my opinion in regard to potatoes is very valuable—the opinion of the Minister of Agriculture would be vastly more so—but I should think that the essence of this legislation is quality and the maintenance of our reputation in the markets of the world; and the purpose of the board would be to see that this was not impaired or bedevilled by goods being thrown on the market irrespective of quality. I think that unless the board can effect improvement in that respect, this legislation will not be of tremendous advantage. I should think it far more likely to effect improvement in that way than in the way of dickering or orderly marketing. But, of course, I speak as one approaching the question from the outside. In seeing to it that only worthwhile goods go abroad, the board ought to be able to accomplish something, and certainly it ought to be able to do what the honourable senator from King's (Hon. Mr. Hughes) has in mind, namely, to obtain higher prices for higher quality. I do not see any difficulty in this section.

Hon. Mr. HUGHES: I will state what my difficulty is. I could not tell from the remarks of the Chairman whether it was intended that the opinion of the majority of persons engaged in producing that product in each province should prevail, or whether the majority of the producers in the three provinces combined would have the determining voice. I want to make sure, if I can, that the people of