

Agricultural Products Board

which was satisfactory to us and to them, they have come here and advised us on every important action that has been taken from that time down to the present. I suggest that none of those who are closely associated with that organization will suggest that this procedure ought to be changed. But that applies more to boards that are settling these matters of policy which members have been concerned about, and I am quite sure that the farm organizations would be the last to ask that farmers be put on this particular board, because we do not know whether this board is going to operate to any great extent. The board, as it is operating, has been operating under order in council, under the measure we put through last year which was set up under the Department of Trade and Commerce. We had the right to appoint various organizations as emergency organizations. This one was appointed as an emergency organization to handle butter. It is assumed that there will be other operations that will need to be handled. The board was named under that authority. It consists of Mr. Pearsall, who was chairman of the old meat board; Mr. Chagnon, the vice-chairman; Mr. Nelson Young, director of production, as a member; Mr. W. C. Cameron, who is at the head of our dairy branch, as a member, Mr. Wheeler and Mr. Berry. Those men are all members of the staff of the department. There are no salaries to be paid out. They are simply there in case it is decided, perhaps over a few months, to buy some particular product. They are not operating as a buying and selling board. They are simply there as a group that could be called together and asked to buy a commodity for the time being in order to serve some purpose, or deal with some condition brought about through the administration of another act, or another operation within the department or some other department.

Now I repeated that in order to show that the board has not the important function that might be indicated by the language that has to be used in setting up a board of that kind. Certainly, the board has to be given the authority to buy and sell. But it is set out very carefully in the act that they cannot buy and sell at all unless they are asked to do so by the government, not by the minister, but by order in council. That is the only way they can buy or sell anything. They are not set up to buy and sell any farm product from day to day. I would suggest again that the board is not nearly as important as has been suggested in this discussion.

I do not believe it would be possible for me to discuss what has been said to any

greater extent without getting into the position of discussing something which is not covered by this bill. When we get into committee, if there is any information desired about farm prices and the sale of farm commodities that it is proper members should be asking for, I am quite prepared to answer those questions. I do not believe I would be pursuing correct procedure if I were to enter into a general discussion of those other measures, and other activities under other bills, in the manner that has been followed by some of those who have taken part in the debate. I again move the second reading of the bill.

Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and the house went into committee thereon, Mr. Dion in the chair.

On section 1—*Short title.*

Mr. Wright: On section 1, I should like to comment on statements which have been made by some of the members about the bulk buying being carried on by Great Britain. I should like to direct the attention of this committee to the fact that bulk buying was not started by the Labour government. It was started by the coalition government during the war, was continued by the Labour government, and is still being carried on by the Conservative government in Great Britain. Evidently they believe it is the best method by which they can obtain their supplies. There are certain other questions I want to ask, but I shall leave them until we come to the appropriate sections of the bill.

Mr. Blackmore: Will the minister state whether or not this bill has as its major function the finding of markets for Canadian products? Is that intended to be part of the work of the board set up under this bill?

Mr. Gardiner: No, that is not one of the functions of this board at all. Of course, it is the general function of the marketing branch of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Trade and Commerce as well, but this board has not that authority.

Mr. Blackmore: Why then is the provision made for buying and selling?

Mr. Gardiner: Let us take the one product, butter. If butter is bought, of course it is going to be sold. We are just bringing it here for the purpose of seeing that it is sold. It is brought to Canada because our supply is short. The board has the authority to sell, and may do that by simply selling it to some branch of the trade which will distribute the butter to the public.

Mr. Blackmore: It is just a sort of agent for doing a job?