

a very important measure. The amendment leaves to the leader of the government the selection of the committee or the composition of the special committee to which this Bill might be sent. This is not a new question, but there are new features in connection with this Bill. It is casting no reflection upon the ability or the energy or the care of the hon. minister who introduced the Bill to say that if we submit this to a committee having special knowledge of the matter and having special facilities for investigation, good as the Bill may be, it will be greatly improved.

Throughout this whole discussion I have desired that this Bill should be referred to the Committee on Agriculture. What have we a Committee on Agriculture for if not to consider such questions as this? The fact that it has been before the Committee of the Whole House is no answer to the present motion for a reference. It is provided by our rules, and sanctioned by our practice, that a motion of this kind may be made at any stage of a Bill. I do not wish to be considered as opposing the principle of the Bill. I recognize that the minister has devoted much time and care to it, and it is shorn of many of the objectionable features which it had when it was introduced. Although I believe, as the hon. member for Brantford has suggested, that it is still full of the seeds of imperfection, yet these might be very well eliminated if it were referred to a special committee; and we have excellent examples for that course. We have the example of Great Britain, a country many centuries older than our country, where, after a full and exhaustive investigation, it was decided that such a measure was not adapted to the conditions of the country; and there may be ground for pausing to see whether this Bill is adapted to the conditions of Canada. At all events, we would have experts on these matters, not only on the committee but coming before the committee to give evidence. We would also have, what the members of the administration, from the Prime Minister down, have been pressing in Railway Bills that those most interested can come before the committee as they cannot come before the House, and express their views. I am entirely in accord with the practice that has prevailed, of threshing out these matters before the House; but this is a matter requiring special investigation, and the knowledge of experts and practical farmers. I believe it is highly in the interest of agriculture that the Bill should be referred to the Committee on Agriculture, with power to send for persons, papers and documents, and that there should be a thorough investigation in order that the faults still in the Bill may be eliminated, or, if not, that the Bill be discontinued.

Mr. BOYCE. I am sure that the House cannot fail to recognize the labour which

the hon. Minister of Agriculture has bestowed upon this Bill, in the honest and faithful endeavour to obtain by legislation pure seed for the farmers of this country. But if, as appears to be the case, the Bill, which has been through several stages in this House, has, in some of its details fallen short of the object in view, if it does not go the length of providing the remedies desired, the hon. Minister of Agriculture should hesitate before he obstructs such further investigation as would throw light upon the Bill, and enable it to become more workable. The hon. gentleman suggested, I think, in committee, that I was here to oppose the Bill. I am not opposing it. I recognize that the principle involved in the Bill is one very much to be encouraged, and I would not detract one iota from the credit due to the hon. minister for the labour which he has bestowed upon it. There are three classes affected by this legislation—the seed merchant, the farmer who purchases seed, and the farmer who grows his own seed. The farmer who grows his own seed has a different line of argument to advance with respect to the provisions of this Bill, from those of the farmer who purchases his seed. The latter is entitled to the fullest protection. In my opinion, which entirely coincides with that of the hon. minister, it is of the utmost importance that pure seed should be guaranteed to the trade at large. As the hon. minister has said, this Bill has been before this House practically for two years. That may be so; but when it came to be considered in committee during the first few days of the present session, it was found to be so weak and to fall short in so many important respects that the hon. gentleman was forced to withdraw it and have it reprinted; and when it came down yesterday in its reprinted form, we found it to be still imperfect. In one clause especially, it had to be amended. So the hon. minister is learning day by day that even when this Bill goes through its final stages, there will be much in it to be altered; and if it can be altered in one respect, it can be in others. I have not heard the hon. minister say that he has received expert testimony upon the clauses referred to by the hon. member for Brantford. It is of the utmost importance that expert testimony should be had before the various clauses of the Bill can be intelligently dealt with. I therefore submit to the hon. Minister of Agriculture that it would be in the interest of the purpose of this Bill, as a practical working measure, to have it put into such form that it would serve the interest of all the classes of people sought to be benefited or protected by it. There is one clause to which I have repeatedly, I fear with tiresomeness, drawn the attention of the House and the hon. minister, that is, subsection 2 of section 8. It is from my point of view an unheard-of thing to legislate that the honest agent for