

*Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill*

lesson by now. Even after almost two years this legislation has not gained general acceptance across the country, and one would expect that any sane government would abandon it and make another attempt by introducing a properly drafted well defined measure. The bill is ill-conceived, poorly drafted, was presented to the public full of distortion, complete with misleading facts and grave misrepresentations.

To this point, some 30 amendments have been introduced. This is similar in nature to the grains bill, Bill C-275, which required some 40 amendments before it was half-workable, and to the stabilization bill, Bill C-244, wherein the government displayed its intransigence, its contempt for the law and the Parliament of this country. It is also similar in nature to Bill C-207, the government reorganization bill with its sweeping powers, and to the Auditor General's bill, which was withdrawn. I must also mention Bill C-259, the tax reform bill, which was forced through this House by closure.

The bill before us is no different from the bills I have cited, Mr. Speaker. Because the bill has been around for a long time the majority of producers who will be affected by its contents are becoming more and more alarmed by its implications. In spite of the clear manifestation of non-acceptance across this country, substantiated by the ruling of the Supreme Court, the government continues to pursue this piece of legislation and will probably use every conceivable method to put it through, whether that be by closure, coercion or some other method.

The sad fact about this particular piece of legislation and other pieces of farm legislation is that the government has removed itself completely from the realities of agriculture. The major problem facing farmers today is not overproduction; it is simply that they need a raise in pay. They need to derive more income for their efforts, having invested capital to produce foodstuffs for this country and the export market. They simply need more money in order to eke out a living and survive.

They do not need a union, as was suggested by my hon. friend from Fraser Valley West (Mr. Rose)—and I shall have something to say about that, Mr. Speaker. As cost of production continues to rise even though the method of production is being streamlined and is becoming more efficient, farm incomes are remaining relatively static. This type of situation makes it a haven for the integrator, for corporate monopoly processors, food companies and so on, to take over. They alone will capitalize on this type of environment.

● (4:30 p.m.)

This bill only sets out to simplify the transitional process by expediting the removal of the small farm operation from the land and placing it firmly in the control of monopolistic corporations. If we are to place any credence on the minister's declaration to the National Farmers Union meeting recently in Winnipeg that the small family farm is an asset and a desirable unit, then I suggest immediate steps must be taken to increase the net return to all farmers, not just to a select group of corporate structures.

A look at what has happened in the past few years reveals that the farm products index has risen from a level of 100, as established in 1961, to a level of 113.1 in

[Mr. Mazankowski.]

1971, a period of ten years. In the past three years the realized net income has been reduced by some 45 or 50 per cent. The cost price squeeze is having a tremendous effect on the life blood of the small farm community. These people will be forced to retire to an enforced retirement program of the sort enunciated by the minister in his small farm development program.

The government's answer to this is simply to help the big operators get bigger and to heck with the small fellow. In this bill, and in the various measures introduced, the concept of more efficiency is advocated. To me more efficiency means the provision of more goods and services at lower prices.

Let us look at what happens in other sectors. I do not have the figures for the whole of Canada, but in Alberta wages and salaries since 1967 have increased by 30 per cent. Correspondingly net income has been reduced by 44 per cent in the farm sector, while the cost of living index has increased something in the area of 13 per cent. At the same time, the commodity index relating to input in the agricultural industry has increased by some 14 per cent. This simply means we must take steps to improve the net income position of our farmers in Canada.

This bill does not set out to do this. There is nothing in the bill to indicate any measure of collective bargaining. There is nothing in this bill to establish a two-price system. Why is there nothing of this nature in the bill if it purports to establish an efficient, competitive and viable farm industry? Surely there should be some provision in this bill which for once allows the producer to dictate to the consumer his suggested selling price.

The bill, rather than putting the squeeze on the producer, should incorporate into its provisions adequate income maintenance and adequate returns for labour and investment. I know the incorporation of a two-price system for wheat involves a political decision, but certainly to ask for a realistic two-price system for a commodity such as wheat would not be asking for the impossible. Why cannot there be a system of protective devices for agriculture such as prevail in the European Common Market countries? It strikes me there should be such devices in this bill. But unlike agricultural policies in the European Common Market, the policies of this government are moving away from protective provisions for the primary producer, while all the other major agricultural producers in other countries are moving in the other direction. This government is asking the primary producer to be efficient, to be viable, to compete in international markets and to purchase his input in a protective Canadian market.

I do not believe it would be asking too much to incorporate some protective devices into our system so that the farmers can realize an adequate income from their effort and investment, something which continues to be increasingly difficult. A number of people have argued that this bill will give farmers the same opportunity to negotiate and to organize as the unions. I see nothing of this sort provided for. I simply say that this bill will strangle the opportunity of young people and old who wish to engage in the business of agricultural production.

The hon. member for Portage (Mr. Cobbe) mentioned that all other occupations and professions are organized.