

*Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill*

to have a National Farm Products Marketing Council. Various boards are to be established with government appointees, without any meaningful participation by farmers, those directly affected by the legislation.

Another matter that requires examination is the corporate invasion of the agricultural industry. This is a real danger to farmers and to the industry. It threatens the entire social and economic fabric of rural Canada. Admittedly, some aspects lie beyond federal jurisdiction and require provincial action, but the questions that must be asked with respect to this bill is: Will it be used as a tool by corporate enterprises to consolidate their position? Will it enable corporate enterprises engaging in agriculture to consolidate their position and give them an advantage over ordinary farmers who are attempting to make a living by farming?

A few minutes ago I referred to the remarks made by the Minister of Agriculture when he was introducing this bill. I suggest that he used a very hesitant tone in bringing the bill before this House. He suggested that in his view the situation—

—makes it at least desirable if not essential that we have enabling legislation on the statute books—

That is recorded at page 5968 of *Hansard*. Note the words "enabling legislation." This raises an important question as to what initiative the government will bring to bear once this legislation is placed on the statute books. The minister also noted that there are serious problems in the agricultural industry associated with fluctuations in farm income. I am glad he recognized that point. But then he went on to suggest that the real purpose of the legislation was to improve the efficiency of our marketing systems.

I have no quarrel with the objective of greater efficiency as long as it is kept within a proper context. Efficiency is not an end in itself. Efficiency is a means which is only well directed if it is directed towards a good and useful end. I suggest that when the minister placed his greatest stress on efficiency he overlooked one of the basic aspects of the farm marketing situation throughout Canadian history, namely, the instability which has been inherent in agricultural marketing. Surely the basic purpose of marketing legislation, whether it be at the federal or provincial level, should be to achieve stability.

The minister said that specific marketing agency legislation had been enacted in the [Mr. Burton.]

past. He made specific reference to the Canadian Wheat Board. I agree that there is an overdue need for legislation to deal with the whole range of farm products to ensure that they might be marketed on an orderly basis. He also said that the basic role of the National Farm Products Marketing Council would be to provide guidance and advice. I have no quarrel with the establishment of this body for that purpose. Certainly it can play a very useful role. It can also provide liaison with provincial marketing agencies and provincial governments. But, again, the whole question depends on what action the government is going to take.

• (9:50 p.m.)

Such a council can make all the recommendations it likes; it can do everything possible to try and proceed with adequate marketing legislation, but unless it has the full support of the government none of the problems this bill attempts to start to solve will be solved. Mr. Speaker, I could go on to comment further on some of the minister's remarks in dealing with the bill on second reading. It seems to me that we had in the minister's remarks a very real indication that the government will move forward in a very hesitant, cautious way in making use of the legislation. I think it is important that we take note of the whole question of the approach to marketing problems once this legislation has been established.

In his speech the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) made reference to the Canadian Wheat Board. In my view the Canadian Wheat Board has done an outstanding job in the past. I think there is no good purpose to be served by anyone in this House continuing, for whatever purpose he has in mind, to pillory the Wheat Board commissioners. I think this does no one any good. I think it does a disservice to the farmers of western Canada and to the interests of all Canadians, because in my view the Canadian Wheat Board brought order and stability to the wheat scene in this country and to the grain scene in western Canada.

There have been problems, there have been some distortions in the picture, but I suggest that this has not been due basically to whatever shortcomings the Wheat Board commissioners may have had as individuals. After all, they are human beings just like the rest of us, and they can make mistakes just as any of us can. They have attempted to do a good