

Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill

continue to pay an inflated price for eggs which is established by an illegal cartel which resists the ordinary laws of supply and demand and keeps prices up by dumping eggs. The people of Newfoundland, the consumers, will have to pay for this escape clause, clause 31 of the bill, notwithstanding the assurances the minister gave me in this House when I raised the matter at the time of the establishment of the Newfoundland Egg Marketing Board a few months ago.

I hope that the minister will address himself to that argument, because as I read clause 31 that is precisely the result and the effect of it. It will mean that provinces which do not decide to be a part of the marketing council to be established by this legislation will be able to continue operating their own illegal marketing cartels notwithstanding the ruling of the Supreme Court of Canada and notwithstanding section 121 of the British North America Act.

I say, Mr. Speaker, that it is a sad day for Canada when we allow the constitution of the country to be violated by legislation passed by this House.

Mr. Olson: Boy, is he ever mixed up.

Mr. McGrath: I should like to ask the minister what the position of the marketing boards already established in the provinces will be if this bill passes in its present form. For example, if they decide to opt out and not be a part of the over-all marketing council, will that then represent *de facto* recognition by the government of the right to exist of that provincial marketing board? If that is the case, then this bill violates the law of the country. It violates the constitution and denies the provinces free access to the common market that is Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I know that there is nothing that I nor anybody else can say that will change this bill at this late hour. The government will have its way. But that does not take away from us our responsibility, indeed our right, to lay these arguments on the record because there is concern across the country. This country is much more than the two provinces of Quebec and Ontario. The country must be a common market if it is to be anything.

I am concerned with this bill. I think it is unfortunate that not enough arguments have been addressed to the effect that it will have on production in Canada and the effect that it will have on the consumer. I was examining the records and I was rather disappointed at the small input by consumer groups when the bill was before committee. I believe the various consumer associations are concerned, but I do not believe that they realized the full impact of the bill. I think one consumer group appeared before the committee but I do not think they fully realized that this bill would permit removal of the protection afforded consumers and producers by the constitution of the country, by the various judicial decisions of the Supreme Court of Canada and the provincial courts of the land—an assurance of free access to the markets of Canada, which is the best assurance we have of keeping down prices to the consumer. I believe that instead of having access to the free market that is Canada we will now have a bureaucracy that will be able to dictate prices of produce, restrict the flow of trade and halt the ordinary laws of supply and demand which would govern the price for the consumer in this country.

In view of the late hour, Mr. Speaker, perhaps it might be as well if we all decided to cash it in and sing "Auld Lang Syne" because this is New Year's Eve. I am glad to see the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) in his place tonight: he has to get used to late nights from now on. As the father of six, I can speak with authority on that subject. Perhaps it might be as well to close debate with "Auld Lang Syne," not only on this bill which has been before the House for the last two years but for the free market that was Canada.

Mr. Ross Whicher (Bruce): At this late hour, Mr. Speaker, it is not my intention to take too long. As a member of the Standing Committee on Agriculture since 1968 when we were first elected, I feel it my duty and obligation to say something about this bill which has taken so long to culminate—we hope—at this very late hour. When the last speaker was suggesting that we sing "Auld Lang Syne" I could not help doubting whether even the Tories would want to sing it for such a speech as he gave.

An hon. Member: He meant "Old Arthur Lang".

Mr. Whicher: My dear friend, you are a perfect example of why we should legislate birth control. With an example such as you, we should make it retroactive. You do not bother me at all, because I am used to professionals and you are not one of those. If it comes to a battle of wits, you haven't even half a chance.

Mr. Speaker, I have been a member of the agricultural committee for the last three years. In this respect I want to compliment members of the Conservative party, and particularly the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner). In my opinion he has done much to bring this bill to culmination.

An hon. Member: That is the kiss of death.

Mr. Whicher: I think that he has represented the farmers of Canada along with government members, members of the New Democratic Party and members of the Social Credit party from Quebec. The time had come when we all realized that something had to be done for the agricultural industry of Canada.

• (1:50 a.m.)

No matter whether high school teachers in Newfoundland or Toronto, engineers in Montreal, politicians in Ottawa, Toronto or St. John's or nurses think they are at the low end of the totem pole, the people who get the thin end of the wedge are those in agriculture in this dear Canada, of ours. I remember 17 or 18 years ago, when I first got into politics, thinking that even if it were the last thing I would do, I would try to improve the condition of the people in my area involved in agriculture.

Mr. Bigg: What took you so long?

Mr. Whicher: Mr. Speaker, I say to you with bowed head, those people are worse off now than when I started.

An hon. Member: Because you were elected.

Mr. Gibson: Why don't hon. members on the other side let their members speak? He is a better speaker than many members on that side.