

Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill

was sensible and produced magnificent results without requiring farmers to be licensed. By cutting off government support for all hogs raised on commercial type farms we put hog raising back on the family farm where I claim it belongs. We are talking of principles here. If the wrong principles are used, no amount of legislation or regulations will undo the damage. In placing in the hands of a governmental, bureaucratic institution or in the hands of nine self-appointed experts the full responsibility for raising, gathering, marketing, pricing and regulating all or most of Canada's farm products, I suggest you are being party to one of the greatest crimes ever perpetrated on the Canadian people.

Clause 22 says that we want a strong, efficient, competitive production and marketing industry for regulated products of agriculture, and then goes further and says "with due regard to the interests of the consumers of the regulated product or products". That may sound like a very statesmanlike approach to the whole problem; it is as though the government had said it would tailor the agricultural industry to the needs of the consumers of Canada. In view of today's cost of living, I have great sympathy for the consumers of Canada. But I do not think that the consumers of Canada necessarily want to put the whole burden on the backs of the farmers. There are very few people in Canada who are more than two generations away from the little family farm. There is probably no one in Canada who does not recognize the fact that nobody does more for his take-home dollars than the family farmer.

In addition to that, when you buy a loaf of bread, a piece of beef or a sack of Prince Edward Island potatoes, you are buying not only the labour of the farmer but the labour of his whole family. You are buying a dedication to a way of life which is essential to a healthy, happy Canadian society. This is no place to start adjusting the whole cost of living. You merely reduce the farmer to the point where he becomes a so-called efficient cog in an otherwise very inefficient machine.

The agricultural industry during the last 20 years has risen to the challenge of producing cheaper and better food, and in a manner that has astounded the western world. Farmers who have been asked to double their production have done so, and in many cases have tripled and quadrupled it. What has happened to the farmers as a result? Their security has often shrunk to the point where they have had to sell out to the so-called efficient corpo-

[Mr. Bigg.]

ration that is only interested in the narrow view of efficiency—cheap food by overproduction.

In 1957 the Diefenbaker government inherited a crisis in agriculture. Although they did not think they had all the answers, they did go to work on a new, dynamic, flexible policy and experimented. True, they made mistakes. One of the mistakes they made was to subsidize certain farm products without imposing a ceiling on production. This experiment was a bold one, but it failed miserably because the subsidizing of farm products did not necessarily bring about cheaper food on the table of the working man. Instead it presented a subsidy bill for pork products alone to the Canadian taxpayer in 1959 and 1960 amounting to \$23 million and \$24 million respectively.

Members knowledgeable in agriculture advised the then Minister of Agriculture that his programs needed tailoring, and the result was that we went back to the same old principle of supporting the family farm. In a sense, we licensed the farmers and paid support prices to those who worked on the land, but we did not give unlimited support to those who did not make their basic living from the land.

The same sort of experiment fell flat on its face when it was tried in Ontario in the poultry industry. The broiler industry was largely taken off the farm and was exploited by corporations. Provincial poultry marketing boards were set up, organized by the poultry raisers themselves. They set the marketing plan.

• (4:20 p.m.)

An hon. Member: Let us call for a quorum.

Mr. Bigg: They determined the quotas. I believe—I stand corrected if I am wrong—that the poultry industry in Ontario has settled down under a workable and viable system which enables the poultry people to make a living and support their families as unregulated Canadian citizens. Mr. Speaker, I appeal through you to the present Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) and his 40 Ph.D's who sit around him, I hope giving him advice, that we do not repeat the expensive errors that have already been made in the past. We have shown the way to correct them. The way is to leave these industries in the hands of the producers themselves. They have not been exorbitant in their demands. Because they are good farmers and good citizens of Canada, they have kept their prices and their quotas