

*Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill*

● (9:30 p.m.)

Brunswick, a three-column headline which reads, "Potato Growers Ask for Help. Prices are Plunging".

I wish to quote from an article in the *Fredericton Daily Gleaner*, the most Conservative of Tory papers in the Maritimes. The headline reads, "National Potato Board Urged by Federation." This is the New Brunswick Federation of Agriculture. I quote from the article regarding the potato situation:

The New Brunswick Federation of Agriculture meeting in Fredericton voted for establishment of a National Potato Board, to operate in a similar manner as the Canadian Wheat Board.

The National Potato Board would be responsible for marketing the Canadian potato crop, establishing price levels, and imposing marketing quotas on producers.

The New Brunswick Federation of Agriculture is a body composed of farmers, producers and potato growers. This board is not talking on behalf of the government or the government establishment; it is talking on its own behalf. The federation is requesting the government to set up a national marketing board and to introduce legislation to that effect. The article continues:

In the discussion which took place, before the potato board resolution was adopted by the meeting, it was pointed out that the procedures currently being developed for the operation of a Canadian Egg Commission might be adapted for use in the national marketing of potatoes.

New Brunswick growers, during the past two years,—

This refers to the 1966-67 and 1968-69 potato crop years.

—have been selling potatoes at less than the cost of production, estimated at 80 cents for a 50-pound bag.

It was also pointed out that in order for a National Potato Board to operate effectively, it would be necessary for growers in each potato producing province to organize provincial marketing plans. Growers in New Brunswick in the past have found it impossible to agree to any marketing plan for a long enough period of time to give the plan a chance to work.

That was in 1968. This year we have had another example of farmers, not refusing to cooperate with the provincial government but refusing to find a decent compromise to the solution of some of their most pressing problems in the field of marketing. I may make reference to this situation later on. The fact is that farmers recognize that something must be done, and done soon, to organize their industry, because they are left at the mercy of fluctuating markets and the law of supply and demand which does not always work out, in this age of technology, the way they would like.

In respect to the bill itself, I think it is imaginative and far-reaching. I am a little sorry that some hon. members opposite did not feel it proper to adopt a more positive attitude when commenting on the purposes of the bill. As a matter of fact, they seemed to prefer to point out some of its shortcomings. Mind you, Mr. Speaker, there are some shortcomings and I have recognized a few. If I am given the opportunity to sit on the Agricultural Committee, I intend to speak about them. But tonight we are discussing the principle of the bill, which I think is a good one. Some order in the over-all field must be brought to the marketing of agricultural products. Too often has the whole industry been open to speculation.

[*Translation*]

—and open as well to dishonest people, to profiteers who have no qualms about crossing provincial boundaries now and then in order to shamefully exploit these poor farmers.

Needless to say, the latter sometimes take us to task for blaming them for their ignorance. It is true that there may still be illiterate farmers, but they are not ignorant.

However, when we the representatives of the people, in many cases elected by a majority of these farmers, want to make constructive suggestions to them, they immediately believe that we want to make them look like a bunch of ignoramuses.

Personally, I blame the farmers not for their ignorance or their illiteracy but especially for their stubbornness and their refusal to want to consider a situation and co-operate more with governments. After all, they are the ones who elect the representatives, but once these have become members of the government in power, the farmers sit back and wait for the government to work miracles and get them out of their troubles.

Sad to say, it just happened again in New Brunswick. While the farmers resent our saying these things in public, they do not hesitate to sling mud at us when things are not going well. In fact, when the year has been a good one and potatoes sell well, the politicians get no credit for it, but when things go wrong, the farmers blame it on the members of Parliament, the government and the Public Service.

Mr. Speaker, I said my remarks would not be very long. So I shall now conclude by saying that this bill must be referred to the Committee on Agriculture as soon as possible