

Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill

10,000 hens. I am sure he will vote that way, because he is a Liberal.

I suggest that the idea of allowing the farmer to negotiate a forward price is a revolutionary step. However, this whole bill is out of date by many, many years and I see no safeguards being provided on behalf of farmers just because they are farmers. I hope hon. members will agree that this clause should be returned to the committee so that consideration can be given to the principle of allowing a farmer to seek the establishment of a forward price which will take into consideration his needs, his costs of production and his ability in conjunction with his neighbours and friends to negotiate the price of the commodity on which their very existence depends.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, in the calm of night, I should like to make a few brief comments on Bill C-176 to make my colleagues up and at the same time to analyze the bill very seriously and to ask the government, and particularly the hon. Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) to consider certain weaknesses in the bill.

In my opinion, these weaknesses will bring about economic divisions which will require court decisions for the National Marketing Council will not have enough authority to decide on contentious issues that will inevitably arise between the marketing agencies in the various provinces.

The first objective of this bill should be to enable Canadian producers to get better organized in order to market their production in an orderly way in Canada, so as to ensure an equitable income for themselves, without removing from the consumer the privilege of choosing the product that suits him best.

Mr. Speaker, the problem is always the same in agriculture. I wonder if a solution will ever be found to do justice to farmers but, in any event, I should like to quote an excerpt from the report of the 18th Conference of IFAP held in Paris in 1971. The analysis of this report will reveal that what goes on here also happens elsewhere because it is still called "agriculture" elsewhere. Everything remains to be done. From time to time, some would like to alter the situation, improve it, so that those who live off agriculture might have some security. Now, here is what we find in that report:

The key problems agriculture now faces are the following: ensuring better income and a higher standard of living for farmers; achieving more balance between supply and demand; improving the methods of distributing food products; adapting agrarian structures; and achieving a positive and more rational use of the resources.

This is a worthwhile aim indeed. Most of the organizations which represent the farmers of the world must stress the seriousness of the financial crisis now facing the farmers.

I go on with the quotation:

Since the Tokyo Conference, the gap between the incomes of farmers and of other professionals has tended generally to widen, in spite of the efforts made in certain countries to adjust supply to demand and in spite of an improved market balance of the main basic products.

• (12:30 a.m.)

In my opinion, it means that the countries which have attempted to adjust production to demand regardless of

the consequences for the producers concerned, have met with failure.

I continue to quote:

For 2 years, the cost of essential commodities for farmers has often been increasing much more quickly than at the end of the sixties. The higher prices were not enough to offset increased costs. In some countries, the problems facing many groups of producers are not as much due to inflation as to other factors—for example, an inadequate access to markets. At all events, the absolute value of farming incomes has either decreased or has not increased enough to offset the general trend of currency depreciation. It follows that, in real terms, the farmers have not succeeded in securing an appreciable share of the benefits due to their increased productivity.

Which means that, while production has increased, we have not succeeded in doing justice to this category of workers, even when trying to impose systems which, at first glance, seemed promising. The same applies to our country. I continue to quote:

That is surely the basic reason why, in many countries, the farm community, usually the sector having the most respect for the law and the most stable—

And I believe that it will be recognized that the rural population has an innate respect for the law. These very stable people endeavour to maintain freedom and order in our society. So, these rural communities have, and I continue to quote:

resorted to certain forms of protest in order to make themselves heard. One cannot but regret the need for such forms of action, but often enough they have represented the only way of fighting the people's—and even the government's—indifference and apathy.

Then, Mr. Speaker, the same thing is happening in Canada. A few days ago, a demonstration was held here by a large delegation of producers from Quebec who came here to meet the Minister of Agriculture Mr. Olson, who is the minister responsible for the Wheat Board, and to make representations for equality of opportunity in the food industry in order to be able to produce at a cost comparable to that prevailing in other Canadian regions. And these people who came here to give their sincere support to their members left without getting much satisfaction. They wanted to use that sort of pressure in order to have their rights acknowledged and to try and obtain justice.

To be really fair towards all areas of Canada, the government will have to assure the eastern producers that they will be able to get their grain supplies at the same price as western producers, so that their production costs will not be higher, thus allowing them to make about as much profit as is made in other parts of the country.

I consider this as a necessary first step if we really want Bill C-176 finally to bring favourable results. But we shall have to make a good start by providing all Canadian producers with equal opportunities.

In my opinion, the marketing of grain at uniform prices throughout Canada would be instrumental in achieving better conditions for the establishment and operation of marketing agencies, failing which conflicts of interest would arise between economic areas. This point has been raised many times during the debate by hon. members representing various regions of Canada who did so, I believe, quite sincerely in order to press the government to bring forward likely to promote better understanding