

Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill

being of farmers, that sincerely wants to set up that "just society" or, at least, make it more just from day to day, should have thought of implementing programs offering an alternative to the farmers who cannot earn their living off the farm, that they might have oriented themselves towards another profession.

I urge the government to set up, as soon as possible, a pension plan for farmers of a certain age.

Have training programs been provided for the others? Have welfare services been guaranteed sufficient additional subsidies to help those people? In each of the provinces, most of all in Quebec where the rate of unemployment is very high, many more than the 100,000 jobs promised by the Quebec government will be required to help the hard-pressed farmers.

Can the minister tell the House that every effort will be made to avoid frustration and discouragement among many farmers faced with an inhuman policy? Can the minister tell us right now how many producers will be possibly affected? If he cannot answer this question, I suggest this piece of legislation cannot have any positive results.

In order to protect all Canadian farmers and especially those in my province, I ask the government and the minister concerned to examine this thoroughly, before going ahead with this bill. As for me, I can assure them of my co-operation as well as of that of my colleagues.

In concluding, Mr. Speaker, I should like to recall to all members that several briefs were submitted to the Committee on Agriculture. Incidentally, those briefs that were prepared by various associations are very well written.

The Committee on Agriculture—as was pointed out and I will repeat it—spent hours, days and weeks not only to hold sittings to find practical solutions to Canada's agricultural problems, but also to visit farms of all kinds throughout Canada, which enabled the committee members to know and understand much better the agricultural problems.

I recognize that some of my colleagues have much better qualifications than I have but it was easy for me to understand the position in which the farmers found themselves and the nature of their needs.

• (3:30 p.m.)

This having been said, I must agree that the experience I gained in that committee still worries me, for the bill having been intro-

[Mr. La Salle.]

duced by the government, the decisions were made along party lines, as they say in politics.

I cannot unearth old memories about that party line since I am a new-comer in the House, but such party line seems to be a cause of embarrassment for many members.

Clearly, many hon. members wished to support steps that would serve the Canadian citizens, as well as their province. However, as they had probably been instructed not to make any changes, there was no hope that valid amendments that would help the farmers, who are in great need of help, according to all hon. members, would be introduced in committee.

Again, I urge all hon. members to show some courage and some sincerity, and to keep the commitments made during election campaigns and the commitments they make each day. And I believe that with such courage and sincerity, we could really serve the Canadian people and that particular group represented by the Canadian farmers.

I am worried about the work done in committee, and I believe I am right in saying so. Perhaps we should, in this House, and with the minister's agreement, approve some amendments and some suggestions. Perhaps the minister will suggest to the government members to accept some amendments, and this for the ultimate good of the farmers.

If I had once more to urge the minister to intervene to improve the lot of these farmers and producers, I would gladly do it on their behalf, because I dare trust his good faith and his goodwill. All hon. members, both in committee and in the House, must show similar intentions. This is the way we can truly serve the Canadian producers.

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, once again, Bill C-197 is like putting the cart before the horse.

Instead of offering solutions to cope with the farm problem, and to allow farmers to market their products, we procrastinate trying to create new agencies in order to help the farming community.

Mr. Speaker, even if we recognize that the farming community makes up only 8 per cent of the population, and that the urban community comprises 92 per cent of the people, there is an undeniable fact: it is that obviously agriculture remains the basis of the whole economic structure of Canada.

The urban population would not live very long were it not for the farmers. This is why