

*Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill*

prices which are too low. I have a book entitled "The Search for Stability," written by Charles Schwartz. It is not a new book, but after reviewing it today I find that some of the arguments in it are still valid. He deals with a time during the 1920s when farmers were concerned about the lack of bargaining strength, or what he calls the countervailing power. My father was a farmer in Saskatchewan early in the history of that province. The story he tells me is quite similar to my own experience.

With the exception of a short period during World War I and a short period immediately following World War II, the farmers in western Canada have fought low prices and a poor bargaining position. Last spring and last summer, as a member of the Agricultural Committee I toured the country and discovered that Prairie farmers are not the only people who have problems in this regard. I discovered, for example, that in the Niagara Peninsula there are vegetable producers, fruit growers and so on whose problems are similar to mine except that they produce a perishable product which must be marketed within a very limited time so that its value will not be lost.

I was a little disturbed about the bitterness expressed by some of these farmers. In Prince Edward Island I heard the same story. In the Fraser Valley I heard a somewhat similar story. I have heard the hon. member for Fraser Valley East (Mr. Pringle) talk about market management and the value of it. I would agree with him that this is a desirable objective. I have also heard the hon. member for Okanagan Boundary (Mr. Howard) talk about the problems and experiences of fruit growers. They do have their problems, but I believe they have been more successful in respect of marketing than some other producers in Canada. I suggest that it is not as simple a matter as they seem to think. I do not say this facetiously at all. They produce a product in a relatively small area among relatively few farmers. It is easier to organize these farmers than it is to organize farmers who are spread right across the country. I think they have achieved more than has been achieved in other agricultural or farming activities. I compliment them on that.

I suggest to the members who represent these areas it is my experience that in a wider area of farming, involving a larger number of farmers, the problem in respect of organizing farmers and the marketing end of the business is not as easy as it is in a smaller

geographic area or in an area where there is a relatively limited or, if you like, captive market which is shut off by mountains or other physical features from the remainder of the country. As a farmer and producer representing a farming area, I should like to see the farmers in my area emulate what they have achieved or at least come closer to achieving it.

As a Member of Parliament representing a farming area, I should like to place in the hands of the farmers more power to control the marketing methods and the price of their products. I think this would be a desirable objective and one which the farmers would applaud. How can we achieve this? I support orderly marketing such as we have had through the Canadian Wheat Board in respect of grains. However, I regret that over the years we have not had more farmer representation on this board. I feel that the farmer's interests might have been better served had this been the case.

• (8:40 p.m.)

On looking at the legislation and checking the Agricultural Products Marketing Act, if my understanding of these two acts is correct, I find that the one which we have on the statute books already allocates federal powers to provincial marketing boards, while in the case of the act now before us the reverse is true. Under the bill before us we are to set up a federal agency and request or invite provincial marketing authorities or boards to co-operate. In effect, this bill is permissive, not compulsory.

I am not quite sure—perhaps someone will tell me before the debate is over—how we will secure the participation of all provinces in a particular item. A particular province might be allowed to participate if it has such legislation on its statute books. I should like someone from the government side of the House to tell us how this might work. Certainly, I look forward to discussing some of the items in the committee. As I understand it, this legislation is permissive. If the provinces wish to join, they may.

Some mention was made earlier today of the reservation that many of us have about the lack of control by farmers over their products. This disturbs me somewhat. The last speaker mentioned the dairy policy in his province. I have seen things happen in regard to the Wheat Board which I thought were errors of judgment. We all make errors, so I do not suppose we should throw stones too