

*Marketing Act—Mr. Brown*

I suppose, Mr. Speaker, that some will say that I have been simply tearing this thing to pieces and trying to attack it in a political way. I have nothing to gain in a political way by attacking this bill. It is not an issue in my district, and I can take as impersonal and unprejudiced a view of it as I ever did of anything. But as I see it, this bill needs not an architect but a wrecker. Let us tear it down and build it up again. All praise and credit to the minister for the conception behind the act, but let us have an act that really regulates and that will be effective in the interests of the men described by my hon. friend from Yale and my hon. friend from Hants-Kings. Then no one will be more willing to support it and promote its passage through the house than myself.

Mr. J. L. BROWN (Lisgar): Mr. Speaker, I think there will be general agreement with the statement of the hon. member for Yale (Mr. Stirling) that this is one of the most important bills that has been introduced into the house in many years. It is generally recognized now that agriculture is the industry upon which the prosperity of Canada must be based, and the marketing of agricultural products is a matter that has given great concern to the farmers during very many years.

In the early days of our farmer organizations in the west, when we undertook to concern ourselves with the marketing of our produce we were practically told by those interested in the trade that the marketing was none of our business, that our business was to produce, and they would take care of the marketing. Well, we did not see it that way. We thought it was a matter of very great concern to us not only to make two blades of grass grow where one grew before but to see that what we produced was put on the market at the highest profit to ourselves. So we proceeded to consider ways and means of marketing, and we did establish cooperative institutions that have functioned with greater or less success, some of them with a great deal of success, and some of them unfortunately proving apparently a failure.

I wish at the outset to pay a tribute to the two hon. members who started the discussion of this bill, the hon. member for Last Mountain (Mr. Butcher) and the hon. member for Hants-Kings (Mr. Ilesley). With their keen legal minds they have analyzed the provisions of this bill and thoroughly exposed its weaknesses, so that it is only necessary for those of us who follow to deal with some of the details and point out some of the situations that are likely to arise and that undoubtedly will arise if the provisions of this bill are put into effect.

[Mr. Neill.]

I wish I could pay a similar tribute to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Weir). So far as explaining the principle of the bill is concerned his speech was very disappointing. Not only did he not deal with the details of the bill, but he did not even remotely touch upon its principles. I can come to only one conclusion, though it may be a wrong one, and that is that this bill was something that was handed to him and that he was told to put it across. But in some respects the minister's speech was an excellent one, and under certain circumstances I could have listened to it with a great deal of interest. The minister showed a very clear understanding of the difficulties that have confronted the farmers in handling their produce profitably. Being a farmer he clearly recognizes the handicaps that have been imposed upon us, but in my judgment he completely failed to set forth even in a general way the principles which he proposes to apply through this bill to remedy the present difficulties.

The minister told us that he had received many communications from all over Canada endorsing this bill. I am not at all surprised at that. The attitude of the farmers, unfortunately, and the same may be said of other sections of the population as well, has been such that during the hard times through which we are passing they are ready to accept almost anything that holds out the slightest hope of better conditions. They are ready to try almost anything, and so I am not at all surprised that a general expression of approval of this bill should have come from many sources. But it must be remembered that these expressions of approval have been founded on a very insufficient knowledge of the bill, and I think we may fairly ask what, after all, are men's opinions worth who only know that it was the intention of the government to bring in a bill to facilitate the marketing of farm produce and who know actually nothing about the details of the measure proposed. It may be that there are institutions here and there which have received copies of the bill and, therefore, are in position to express a measure of intelligent opinion upon it, but I am quite satisfied that many of these expressions of approval have come from men who are not sufficiently informed of the contents of the bill and of how far-reaching it is in some respects. Undoubtedly the avowed purpose of the bill is one of which we must approve; according to the title it is an act to improve the methods and practices of marketing of natural products in Canada and in export trade, and to