

basis of these platitudes. The marketing bill that is before us now tries to straddle some of the old and some of the new. I suggest that in many respects it falls in between, and the farmer is still expected to operate on the same old basis as he has in the past. It tries to strengthen the bargaining power of the farmer, and possibly it helps, but I suggest it is not good enough and it will not really do the trick.

Changes have taken place in our economy over the past number of years. In our economic organization, the concentration of economic power, the influence of technology in all aspects of economic activity have all had an influence on agriculture and on every other sector of the economy. I suggest that no sector of the economy today can operate successfully on an ad hoc or piecemeal basis. I suggest that all industries and all sectors of the economy must operate within the framework of the economic world as it exists. I suggest the only way they can operate sensibly, without causing suffering and hardship, is within a framework of economic planning. Today it is generally accepted that economic planning is essential and must be carried out, but the question is how, and by whom? This is where the bill requires some examination.

● (9:40 p.m.)

I would like to recall briefly to the minds of hon. members the minority report of the Finance Committee on the question of interest rates and inflation. That minority report was presented by the hon. member for Waterloo (Mr. Saltsman) and myself on behalf of the NDP members of the House. In it we called for a comprehensive incomes policy, something which has implications for agriculture. The adoption of such a policy would mean that people making their living in agriculture would be assured of an adequate level of income and could enjoy a good life in their chosen vocation. We must consider this marketing bill in that context, because just where the legislation will lead farmers is not clear. The bill establishes some guidelines but it does not go beyond the old system to which I was referring a few minutes ago.

The consideration of price within the context of this bill is not enough. We must also examine the entire question of income. The bill does not do that in any way. The minority report on interest rates and inflation also dealt with the question of the allocation of

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capital. Here again we must consider the need for an adequate allocation of capital for agriculture, at reasonable interest rates. That report also called for compensation to the victims of inflation. With the possible exception of some old age pensioners and those living on small, fixed incomes, I suggest that no industry and certainly no group of people have suffered more from the effects of inflation than farmers.

Finally, I suggest we are living in a new kind of world where the laws of supply and demand as we knew them in the past cannot be depended upon to provide answers to the problems which are facing us. That, therefore, brings us to the question of government initiative and public action to deal with some of our problems. In this field there is to be a farm marketing council established to which, in its own right, no one can object. The bill suggests that the council can recommend, either on its own initiative or at the request of the minister, measures, proposals and other recommendations. But I suggest that banking on the council to introduce adequate policies is not enough. No council, no matter how well-intentioned or how hard it works, can do this job unless it has an adequate degree of government support.

The government must allocate necessary resources in order to put effective plans into use. This bill does nothing of that sort. Certainly I do not expect all aspects of a proper agricultural policy to be included within the scope of this bill. I suggest the bill provides a vehicle, although it is open to question whether it is the best possible vehicle, to be used in helping to find solutions to farm problems. The use that is made of it will depend both on the government and the farmers.

One important point touched on in this debate is the question of farmer participation. Where does the farmer come into the picture? Does he have an important and meaningful role to play? As has been pointed out by a number of hon. members, there is no guarantee of farmer participation on the boards that will be established under this bill. I suggest that the participation and co-operation of farmers is essential for the success of the legislation. We have heard a great deal from government spokesmen about the necessity of moving in the direction of participatory democracy. This bill, in the way in which it is framed, is a negation and a denial of everything the government has said about the necessity for participatory democracy. We are