

Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill

Last year, Mr. Speaker, I learned just to what extent this bill could be beneficial, because the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) and the hon. member for Mackenzie (Mr. Korchinski) recognized its efficiency during informal conversations in between the meetings of the committee on agriculture. They said that this bill seemed to "smell good" for the farmer. Strangely enough, we do not feel that it will smell good simply for election purposes; we know that this bill will be good for a sector of the Canadian economy. In fact, agriculture represents 35 per cent of the Canadian economy.

• (9:40 p.m.)

We were told that this bill should not be passed, that it would be too advantageous from an electoral point of view. Now, if it were as bad as it was depicted a while ago, I feel a good number of members of the opposition would want it passed, as it would be an excellent means of leading eventually to the downfall of the government. I am convinced that is how things would happen if this bill were really that bad.

But as they know the farmers want this legislation, because it will be truly efficient, they will not let it be passed. And how do they go about it? This afternoon, the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) probably remembered what he did last summer, and that disappointed me. Last summer, the principle of democracy—that the majority decides, and that at times the minority has to accept the decision of the majority—was not recognized. So, at the time when we were sitting in committee to discuss section 2—a section that they would change through an amendment concerning natural products—after a tremendous amount of verbiage, nothing remained to be said. Opposition members saw that they could no longer face the majority of the Committee on Agriculture which stuck to its guns. So, two members, the hon. member for Crowfoot and the hon. member for Mackenzie must remember the two members of the committee on agriculture who retired to the rear of the room and said: You no longer have quorum, and this simply in order to prevent the committee from sitting.

That was deplorable, because members of farm associations had come to Ottawa. There were some from the West, from Quebec and Ontario, and they treated us as children. We were even told: Back home, if we acted like that, we would be taken for ridiculous characters. We were even told that democracy was next to anarchy. What happened in the committee last year seems to be starting all over again here.

I do not want to hold the House too long, so I ask all hon. members to make sure that agriculture will be in a better position tomorrow. Let us not forget that thousands of dollars were lost each week, last fall, in egg production. The same thing might happen with regard to pork or beef. We do not know the future. Production might exceed consumption and then, prices would drop. But some hon. members might not be here after the next election because I imagine they will be defeated if they vote against the legislation. They might have to admit that at the end of 1971, they had the opportunity to solve the real problem, that is the marketing of farm products.

I have been told, before taking part in this debate, that perhaps Bill C-176 would be misunderstood in eastern

[Mr. Côté (Richelieu).]

Canada. This may amuse those who are not from the East, while helping them to understand better the problems of eastern Canada. It has been suggested to me that there might be someone inside the slaughter-houses to take over the overproduction or do something so that this bill will not cure all ills.

I don't believe that by passing this bill we will solve all problems relating to agriculture, but we will at least put in the hands of the producers, who want to control themselves, the marketing of their products, and not have it done by the state, marketing agencies of their own. Afterwards, if conditions are worse, we could perhaps exchange views with producers, but up to now, as politicians, if we can so call ourselves, and as farmers, it is the first such legislation introduced in the House since I have been a member that I urge hon. members to pass.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Honey): Order. The hon. member for Richmond wishes to ask a question.

Mr. Léonel Beaudoin (Richmond): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Richelieu has just said that all Canadian producers are demanding that Bill C-176 be passed. I would like to ask him if he knows that recently, a majority of hog producers voted against the establishment of any program dealing with hog production.

Mr. Côté (Richelieu): Mr. Speaker, the hog producers did not vote against the establishment of a hog producers' association. The production per unit was perhaps heavier among large producers who at times try to exercise control and this is what we want to prevent!

Mr. Beaudoin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague and friend from Richelieu if he knows that those who voted—be they important or not,—were hog producers and that, by a majority vote, they made known that they were against the establishment of a joint program for hog production.

An hon. Member: That is not true.

Mr. Côté (Richelieu): Agreed. I well understand the question and my hon. friend from Richmond, who is from an area where this legislation is eagerly awaited, is right in asking it.

There have been serious problems there. If this bill had been given effect, the egg and poultry producers' association would not have known such difficulties. The beef, egg and poultry producers have formed an association, but as there was no legislation that applied nationally, they have fought amongst themselves, they have dumped their products in one another's region and have had some very difficult problems. They have had money losses because of this lack of national legislation.

When hog producers voted, they were influenced by the fact that broiler production was uneconomical for lack of federal legislation. Hog producers felt that there would be practically no results so long as Bill C-176 had not been passed. So they got confused because of the egg experience and of the opportunity for setting up a hog producers' association, however in the absence of federal legislation they could not be efficient. They did not feel the need for it. That is why we must pass this federal legislation as early as possible. Subsequently, the provincial marketing