

Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill

Mr. Bigg: That is quite apart from amendments presented in the House. I cannot deny what the former speaker has said. He has been intimately connected with farm organizations and the problems in respect of grain. He knows that Bill C-196 in its present form is unworkable and it will be some time before it leaves the committee.

Mr. Olson: Not necessarily.

Mr. Bigg: The minister also is aware of this.

Mr. Olson: We will vote on the amendments as fast as we can.

Mr. Bigg: We will be happy to see the amendments that come forward, but it will take some time for all the farm organizations to be heard. We want to see orderly marketing established, fair prices instituted and the agricultural industry stabilized. We must be assured of these things. There must be consultation before the boards or agencies are established. There must be proper representation on those boards. There must be a sensible and reasonable appeal from the arbitrary decisions of such boards. The appointees must be independent, whether they are farmers or not, and not mere tools of the government.

There are these four main principles involved. I am sure the letter from the president of Unifarm would have been couched in different terms had he been assured by the minister that these things would be done. I hope that in a few months' time the minister will come back to this House and tell me I am wrong. However, at the moment I do not think the farmers of Canada have been given the assurance they require.

Mr. Rod Thomson (Battleford-Kindersley): Mr. Speaker, I should like to say that I do not agree with this amendment. As I understand it, under the BNA Act no provincial marketing agency can be forced to participate in this legislation unless it has the sanction of the provincial government concerned. This is a question we should discuss in the committee, along with other questions. I understand that provincial bodies have the right to vote on whether they will join the marketing agency or whether they will have an agency. If that hurdle were passed, I assume the power to operate under this bill could be delegated. If this is the case, I do not see any need for this amendment. I have very hastily checked this point in the BNA Act. I even spoke to a person who wrote a book about it. If he

[Mr. Olson.]

knows what he is talking about, the situation is as I have explained it.

When this bill reaches the committee I should like to have some of these points clarified. I am somewhat concerned about how control by the respective boards of the council will apply in all cases. We are all aware that no legislation is better than the government which applies it. I believe that in respect of these boards there should be some control by the producers themselves. I should like to see an amendment to the bill which would ensure that this is the case. Further, I believe producers should have an opportunity to appear before the committee. I realize that the government would like early action to be taken on this bill. I can understand that, but I do not think it would be right to rush such a bill through the House when there are points to be brought forward by the people involved in this matter. I can think of no better example than the hearings just completed in respect of Bill C-196.

For the major part of my adult life I have been involved in the grain business as a farmer, as an interested politician and as a wheat pool delegate. I still learn much about legislation from these hearings. It would seem to me that some of the abstract lawyers who sit in Ottawa and draft bills relating to industry are not always aware of the effect of some of their clauses. For this reason I believe committee hearings are useful. They provide an opportunity for those involved in the industry to present their points of view.

In this connection I should like to refer to the Canadian Wheat Board. This agency seems to be a little unrelated to the marketing situation of the day. It would seem to be, in a sort of vacuum, apart from the situation which exists. The Canadian Wheat Board appears to be separated from the grain producers. I feel that producer representation would be useful on the boards contemplated in the bill in order to ensure that the operations of the boards are related to those who produce the product and to the market in general. I should like to make sure that the agencies to be set up under the National Farm Marketing Products Council will have a close relationship to the people who are to be served.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.