

Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill

Today, the small farmers who could have participated in the marketing legislation and who would have been able to avail themselves of this legislation, as they did of the co-op movement, are greatly reduced in number. Only one-fifth of that number is left. There are only some 400 farmers in the area and some of them are as wealthy and productive as farmers in any part of the province of Ontario. We have a viable dairy industry. This has been brought about to some extent by the advent of the milk marketing legislation in the province with which my family has been connected for many years.

Twenty years ago when there was no marketing legislation the farmers got together and decided that this is what they would like, that this is what they expected to get out of it. But what is happening today? We have a piece of legislation which most members do not understand and which I do not understand. We have supply management in this bill, and we are making an exception for eggs by saying that the proclamation will take place when the bill is given royal assent. When the small farmers in my area or any other area of Canada—this is particularly true of the province of Quebec, and I am surprised that the Quebec members do not realize it—first became aware of the need for this legislation they discussed what they could get out of it, what they had to put into it, what the market in the area was and what transportation could be provided. They could then make a decision which would be best for all of them.

That is not the way it is done today. I am sure that in the province of Quebec there are thousands of hog producers. We went to see one hog producer who has 5,000 sows. They produce six or eight litters of pigs every day, but that farmer does not raise the pigs. Under any type of marketing legislation which we might have under a provincial or national plan we will find that the votes will depend entirely on the size of the operation. The little farmer who used to sit around the box-stove in a rural store and make decisions as to how he and other farmers should co-operate does not exist any longer. The fellow who has 5,000 sows farrowing every six months is the one who makes the decisions, not the farmer who has two or three sows.

The party to which I have the honour of belonging has been in a real dilemma since we started discussing this legislation. We firmly believe that there should be a federal marketing legislation. This legislation can be directed at industry rather than agribusiness. It should be possible, if there is a motive to do so, to draft marketing legislation which can work for the individual farmers. But I suggest that in many areas we are 20 years too late and that this legislation will do nothing in most commodity areas but eliminate all the small farmers and small farm organizations.

There is a member here who has been doing a lot of talking from his seat in the last few days. I have made inquiries about what kind of farmers he has in his constituency and I found that his farmers work in a factory. They live on the farm but they drive 30 or 40 miles to the industries surrounding their communities. That is the kind of farmer he has been talking about. He does not need marketing legislation to put them off the farms; they have done this already by themselves.

[Mr. Peters.]

I am sure that there will be people interested in operating this legislation. I am sure Mr. Stewart will be very happy tonight. This, of course, amuses me because it appears that the Conservatives are not in tune with Mr. Stewart, and Liberals on the other side, particularly the hon. member for Elgin (Mr. Stafford), and others, seem to have the ear of the minister of agriculture of the province of Ontario. He has problems with these boards. He even has problems in the dairy industry where we have a national marketing agency. He has difficulties because a board is already set up, as it is in Quebec and other provinces. Neither Ontario nor Quebec want to lose the board because they have people running it, but they are almost at the stage at which they could pool their operations with the Canadian Dairy Commission. This would save a lot of money and eventually some of it would trickle down to the producers. However, there will be fewer and fewer small producers. There will be fewer opportunities for farmers in the Canadian agricultural industry.

● (12:20 a.m.)

We look at this legislation from a nostalgic point of view. For years we have been committed to the idea of marketing legislation, but we have also been committed to the retention of the rural agricultural economy, of a way of life, of social conditions that have existed in a large portion of this country. And we have been unhappy to see the displacement that has taken place through normal attrition. Many of us are of the opinion that this attrition will now take place at a faster rate.

In other countries, farmers themselves—not the cows, not the hens and not the pigs—have done the initial negotiating for the commodities in which they are interested. They have been able to establish a bargaining position in countries that have a central government. But I believe our federal government has the necessary power as a result of the Manitoba court case and other cases. We do have the power to establish central marketing in Canada. We must allow farmers to have a voice in the decision of agencies, not on the basis of the units those farmers represent or of the shares they hold but on the basis that they are members of a rural economy engaged in a particular industry. For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard):

That Bill C-176 be not now read a third time, but that it be referred back to the Standing Committee on Agriculture for the purpose of reconsidering clause 23 thereof.

Mr. Perrault: You are a bunch of reactionaries.

Mr. Peters: An hon. gentleman over there says we are a bunch of revolutionaries.

An hon. Member: "Reactionaries."

Mr. Peters: Oh, reactionaries. The difference is only one of degree. In his area, where there are a lot of working-class people, he does not object to them organizing on the basis of one man, one vote. But I presume when the vote is taken on this amendment he will support the idea that chickens should vote and that, for example, the man in Ontario who owns 500,000 hens will be able to have 500,000 votes against the guy across the road who has only