

Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill

industrial milk shippers in my area, if the question were put to them concerning whether or not they wanted to get rid of the present system as opposed to what they had before I am sure would vote favourably for the present system.

Now I want to come to the part of the bill which is under discussion. I have supported this bill for a long time. I supported the principle of national marketing boards through three general elections. In the general election of 1968—not that this would interest hon. members opposite—it was the single, most important part of my, if you like, agricultural platform because I have believed for some time this concept is relevant to the problems faced by farmers today. I want to indicate that I am not alone in the constituency of Peterborough in support of this bill. I wish to place on record a letter from the Peterborough County Federation of Agriculture. The hon. member for Lambton-Kent knows some of these people. I am glad to see he is going to stay, because he will want to listen to this since it may influence his rather harsh criticism of this legislation. This is not what the backbenchers say; it is what the farmers of Peterborough say.

An hon. Member: When did you dictate this?

Mr. Faulkner: This is dated May 31, 1971. It reads:

Peterborough County Federation of Agriculture wish me to tell you—

That is me, and through me to you.

—they support Bill C-176 in principle and hope you may pass this enabling marketing legislation as quickly as possible.

The Peterborough County Beef Improvement Association as you know passed the same resolution at their annual meeting earlier this year.

Yours truly,

Clifford H. Johnston.

I think it has required a great deal of effort for those of us on this side who in principle support this bill and who have received resolutions of support for it to sit here and wait patiently for this House to come to some agreement. Why have we waited? We on this side have members who represent western constituencies and these members have told me—this is not the nonsense from the other side of the House—that the western farmers have fears and doubts about the bill. These members have told me that they need time to explain it to the farmers.

We on this side of the House, being sensitive on the question of national unity, not being anxious to press too hard for some of the principles of the bill which we believe are good, and not wanting to jeopardize the balance of opinion across this country, wished to allow sufficient time for the bill to be understood. However, even the most patient backbenchers begin to run out of patience, and I believe the best thing for the farmers in the west and in the east is to get this bill through, dispose of the bogeys foisted on the farmers in the east and in the west and let them see that the bill is no threat to their industry and, in fact, in future will provide them with an opportunity that is presently denied them. That is why I think the bill should be passed quickly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but the time allotted to him has expired.

[Mr. Faulkner.]

Some hon. Members: Carry on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Does the House consent to the hon. member continuing?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Faulkner: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the courtesy that has been extended to me. There is one area in which I want to register my disagreement and disappointment. It is not with this House but with the provincial ministers of agriculture. I believe it was a somewhat shortsighted act to request the elimination of the supply management feature.

• (5:40 p.m.)

If the occasion arises where a motion is put and unanimous consent is required to move such an amendment to this Bill, I am prepared to admit it because it is the consensus of the ministers of agriculture and I respect their position. That does not mean that I have to accept the substance. I think it is a shortsighted move. The principle of supply management is not being foisted on the farmers, and if it were I would have grave reservations about putting it in because clearly some producer groups have doubts about it. It was never intended that this should be the case. But there are groups, and there will be more groups in the future, which will want to exercise that option. What we are doing is putting one more step, one more obstacle, to the accomplishment of that goal by requiring commodity groups to come before Parliament to receive approval. I believe it is the consensus of the farmers in my area to have that particular section included, permissive and enabling as it is, so that they could take advantage of it after consensus was reached among the producer groups.

I want to conclude on the note that I regret deeply the decision to take out this section and make it necessary for farmers to come back to Parliament to utilize supply management, because I believe it is the heart of this legislation and it will become even more important to certain producer groups in the future. I think they should have access to it made as easy as possible. I appreciate the courtesy of the House in allowing me extended time and I urge hon. members to support the speedy passage of the bill.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Howard (Skeena): Would the hon. member permit a question?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. The Chair had a previous request from the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Knight). I think it would be preferable if the House gave the hon. member consent to ask his question, if the hon. member for Peterborough (Mr. Faulkner) accepts it.

Mr. Knight: I am sure the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) was charmed by the fact that at least one member of the House still has some sympathy for him. The hon. member suggested that the Minister of Agriculture has a program for the development of small farms. Would he be so kind as to inform me what the definition of a small farm might be, so I can go back to Assiniboia and tell the