

Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill

effectively reducing the economic power of all individuals and transferring it to the state? We must sadly admit that this will likely be the case.

Mr. Don Mazankowski (Vegreville): In rising to participate in the debate on Bill C-197, my objective is to outline some of the points which to me are not too appealing, some of the points on which many of the producers to whom I have spoken in my part of the country have expressed a certain amount of fear. It is my hope that we may discuss the contents of the bill in such a way as to improve it and amend it in the interests of all those concerned.

I have become concerned over the fact that some government members have tended to frown upon or cast derogatory remarks about those in the opposition who have spoken out on this bill, but I think this is a very important piece of legislation. It certainly contains more than meets the eye, and I think it must be discussed. The purport of the bill must be made known so that the producers, those involved in processing, transporting, packaging, etc., will be made aware of what the bill actually contains.

I wonder just what all the rush is about. The government seems to want to push this bill through in great haste. I do not believe that many national farm organizations have yet had the opportunity to examine in detail the implications of the bill, and I believe that we are being rushed into this farm marketing legislation before the government has given us a full and comprehensive agricultural policy. I believe that there is need for a national program on the marketing of farm products. I believe it is both desirable and essential. As pointed out by other speakers, we presently have many marketing boards in existence. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult to co-ordinate the various groups, particularly when it comes to the question of interprovincial marketing. There is a complexity of marketing procedures and of customer demands.

● (5:50 p.m.)

At the present time in the province of Alberta we have a situation wherein an egg marketing board has been established. However, it is being disrupted by a flow of eggs from other provinces at prices well below those established by the marketing board. Hence, the determined effort to create stability and orderly marketing is undermined and jeopardized, and the marketing board as well

[Mr. Ritchie.]

as the producers are facing a dilemma. One would hope that this legislation would serve to overcome situations such as that. In addition, it is only fair to point out that many small producers are also facing a difficulty, that is, the problem of finding a market for small lot shipments and low grade eggs. I can assure hon. members of this House that if this legislation does not take into consideration the welfare and the needs of the small producer, it is certainly not going to be a very effective tool in solving some of the problems and disparities which individual farmers face today.

Turning specifically to the bill, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that the remarks made by the minister when he introduced it on April 14 were somewhat misleading and tended to distort the main purport and intent of the bill. He stated that the bill will provide the legislative framework which would make it possible for farmers to work together in solving their marketing problems. I am sure no one would find any objection to this. However, I have searched diligently but without success throughout the bill in an attempt to observe any clause which might give the slightest indication that farmers are going to be invited to participate meaningfully in solving their problems pertaining to marketing, producing, packaging, and processing.

What we see in the bill is an over abundance of the words "Order in Council" and "the Minister", which spell nothing more than a unilateral proclamation by the government to take over the total operations of the present day producer. This is very sad because I believe most farmers treasure their independence. The producer is the only remaining bulwark of free enterprise and individuality. The bill should be seriously considered in the light of what it may indicate for the future.

The legislation in its present form will create nothing more than governmental paternalism, which will result in very little if any independence for the individual producer. It will give him very little freedom of choice with respect to what he may produce, where he may produce it, and when he may produce it. It will provide very little in the way of opportunity and flexibility for individual producers who may seek to expand or improve their operations.

This bill tends to lock producers in a permanent straitjacket. We have had lots of experience of this in the performance of the Canadian Dairy Commission. It is discriminatory against the small producer. No one can