

Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill

Mr. Jack Murta (Lisgar): Mr. Speaker, just before the six o'clock adjournment we were speaking to the amendment standing in the name of the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Gleave), moved by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). We were talking basically about quota allocations and where they should be applied once the national marketing legislation has been established.

In the few minutes at my disposal tonight I want to show why western Canada thinks it is important for quota allocations to be spread representatively across Canada. As hon. members of the House may know, western Canada produces much of Canada's agricultural produce. Unfortunately, however, we ourselves do not have the population to sustain that production and in the result we depend on exports mainly to central Canada and to world markets. We export a great deal of our agricultural produce. For example, in 1965 western Canada exported 61 per cent of its beef and veal production. In 1969 that figure had moved down slightly to 53 per cent.

Let us consider pork, a commodity which could come under marketing legislation—in the next year or so. In 1965 about 42 per cent of western Canada's pork was exported. By 1970 that figure had increased to 62 per cent. The same holds true for chickens and hens and for egg production. Western Canada produced about 50 per cent of those commodities for export. By 1969 we had produced 59 per cent of the same commodities for export. The same sort of statistics hold true for butter and honey, although to a somewhat lesser degree. Clearly, in devising any marketing scheme this government must be very careful in the allocation of quotas. It must be especially careful if western Canada is to enjoy a viable agricultural industry and if it is to produce the cheapest possible products for Canadians.

On February 2, 1971, the Carman District Farm Business Association presented a brief to the Standing Committee on Agriculture. The farmers in that association make up a good many of the farmers of southern Manitoba, the part of the province from which I come. At one time I was a member of the association. They presented a brief to the committee when it was travelling through Manitoba. One or two sections of that brief are significant if one is to understand the total picture with which we are dealing tonight. With regard to the production of poultry and eggs, the association says in its brief:

Where supply management is unavoidable the allocation of quotas assumes major importance. Farmers have seldom been specific on the techniques of quota allocation. Quota allocation will vary with the commodity and the agency.

The brief says that these minimum guidelines should be spelled out in any legislation that comes before the House of Commons. It then goes on to say that the initial allocation of quotas should reflect the status quo within the country. I think this is important. When we talk about quota allocations we must remember that producers must remain in production. Not only that, they must be given the chance to expand production. Talking about quotas, the brief goes on to say:

They should in no sense be regarded as provincial quotas. They should be prorated to actual producers on a national basis. It is difficult to suggest how the initial allocation of quotas can fairly represent both the asset structure and production variations due to weather, disease, etc. Rapidly changing technology and market

[Mr. Speaker.]

demands suggest that an average of the past five years' production record would be a reasonable compromise. Special consideration should be given where new facilities have not come into full production at the time of inception of a marketing agency.

That is precisely what the amendment deals with. For the most part I completely agree with its aims. The farmers of western Canada need some basis from which to work, as do farmers all across Canada. That basis should be the quota allocations. I think the minister said that for the most part this amendment would strengthen that position.

• (8:10 p.m.)

We have been talking, too, a great deal about the supply management concept in marketing legislation. It is at this point very hard not to talk about supply management when discussing Bill C-176. We have been talking about marketing legislation for almost three years. We started with Bill C-197, on which I did not have the privilege of speaking, but with respect to Bill C-176 I was able to sit on and travel with the committee to a great extent. So since we are now talking mainly about production control—price control, if you like—and quotas in association with supply management of poultry and eggs, I would like to put on record some of my feelings of hesitation with respect to the supply management concept which we have had to accept at least in part.

All through our negotiations and throughout our tour across Canada last winter, the issue most bluntly put by most agricultural organizations was whether certain commodity producers would be able to survive in western Canada, British Columbia, the Maritimes or, more particularly, eastern Canada as represented by Ontario and Quebec. The question is simply, who is going to continue in the agricultural business? What producers in western Canada are afraid of, and I believe this has been echoed in speeches made by other members from western Canada, is that the weight of political opinion will result in marketing quotas loaded in favour of eastern Canada if this legislation is passed in its present form. This is a very real and legitimate fear, Mr. Speaker.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Murta: Hon. members opposite say no. I hope they are right. But this is a genuine fear which has evolved out of discussions and the exercises we have been going through during the last three years or so, so far as western Canada is concerned. Every time we talk about quotas, Mr. Speaker, we have to talk about supply management because without supply management, or a form of it, we would not be looking at this type of quota allocation. I have heard hon. members on the other side discussing supply management, but for my part at least I think they ignore the need for imaginative marketing programs in their efforts to impose this legislation on farmers. Experience has shown that many marketing boards of the kind hon. members opposite seek to establish—

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

Mr. John L. Skoberg (Moose Jaw): Mr. Speaker, I probably will not take the full ten minutes I am allowed, but I