

*Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill*

Having said that, the Minister of Agriculture might well wonder why I do not sit down so that we might get on with the job of passing the legislation. There is one particular reason and I intend to pursue it at some length. The reason is this: the bill delegates sweeping legislative powers to the Minister of Agriculture, the proposed National Farm Products Marketing Council and the proposed marketing agencies for farm products. It does so without any accompanying indication of the direction the policies, to be set by the minister, his council and agencies, will take.

This bill, should it become law in its present form, has the potential to be employed as a powerful instrument for social and economic change in rural Canada. It could be used to accelerate the current rate of rural depopulation or, alternatively, it could be employed to arrest the rot which has set into our rural communities and to aid in slowing the drift of our rural population to the cities. It would be used for either purpose, but our experience over the last two or three decades indicates to us that the former rather than the latter purpose is the one to which it is likely to be put. That is, should the bill become law in its present form, it might well be used as an additional means of driving the small farmer off the land.

I may say that the report of the task force on agriculture which we received today, "Canadian Agriculture in the Seventies", does not offer any solace at all to those of us who are concerned about the trend toward rural depopulation. I must admit that my opportunity to read in excess of 450 pages of the report since receiving it this afternoon was limited, but I did read the summary of recommendations at the front and found it disquieting in relation to what it anticipates will happen in the rural community.

This is one more reason we have some inquiries about the legislation which is before us today. We might take a look at the developments of the past two or three decades. The farmers are becoming clients of agribusiness corporations, or the Americans, or the government. They are becoming wage slaves for the corporations and absentee landlords, or are selling their land to the Americans and thus alienating another piece of a resource which Canada cannot afford to lose. What has already occurred in natural resources and in heavy industry because of the need to mobilize large blocks of capital to compete in an industrial-capitalistic economy is now occurring in agriculture as well. Current policies

are forcing good men off the land and into the cities—to do what? They are being forced off the land to go to our cities and search hopelessly for employment. These cities are ill-equipped to cope with an influx of middle-aged men and women who may have been first-rate farmers but who simply are not trained for commerce and industry.

It is this thought which makes my colleagues embrace this piece of legislation with some trepidation. It is this thought which makes us demand to know to what use the council and the agencies contemplated by the legislation will be put once they are set up. It is this thought which makes us demand the full participation of the producers in the establishment and management of the council and the marketing agencies, because the producers understand the value of the family farm even if their government, despite its lip service to the institution, does not.

Understanding its value, the producers will make every effort to bend this legislation to the service of the family farm. We have less certainty concerning the use to which governmental appointees will put the legislation. This is why we demand producer participation, and not merely because of the obviously salutary effect participation in making the decisions that affect their lives has upon citizens; and it is not merely because we believe in the right of the citizen to participate in such decisions, but also because with producers on the agencies and council we know this powerful tool will be properly employed.

My plea for the continued existence and the upgrading of the family farm is not based upon any premise that rural life is superior to life in a city or that being close to the land instils special virtues in a man. Indeed, even if I did think so I would be mad to say it because my constituency is two-thirds urban. It would perhaps not be politic for me to make such a statement. Nor is my support for the family farm based upon nostalgia. One of the greatest shortcomings of our society, indeed perhaps of all societies, is that nostalgia occupies too common a position in the decision-making process. I find myself fully in accord with various statements made by John Kenneth Galbraith, one of which I would quote:

Social nostalgia supports a continuing conviction that life can be simple and that difficult problems will yield to old and familiar rules and formula. The family and the church will save us; we must have a simple faith for our time; we should be led by a simple man of simple beliefs. We stop just short of praise of the simple mind. Simplicity provides an important clue to social nostalgia.