

Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill

words become the act. It is an amazing exercise, because I know that most, if not all, of the major national farm organizations across the country are involved in this kind of legislation.

Mr. Thompson: That is not what I hear.

Mr. Olson: I know, Mr. Speaker, that we could single out commodities. Let us take beef, for instance. At the present time there are no marketing boards involved in the marketing of beef—

Mr. Korchinski: What about the apple growers of Saskatchewan?

Mr. Olson:—and there probably never will be as long as that industry is not in severe economic difficulty. If no province brings in that kind of legislation, then of course no part of Bill C-197 will ever be applied to the beef industry.

An hon. Member: How can you assure us of that?

Mr. Olson: But, Mr. Speaker, there are other commodities such as eggs, broilers, potatoes and so on where there is a disposition on the part of the overwhelming majority of producers in the regions of significant production to get together and find a way of doing this. Now there is nothing to stop them doing it. I could not agree more that there is probably no prohibition now against all these provincial marketing councils and boards, and also the agencies, getting together in agreement. But, Mr. Speaker, that indicates that members opposite know a lot more than the provincial ministers of agriculture about that problem, because they have been directly involved in it. I have had a series of meetings with them over the last two years, and as much as anyone in the country they are asking that we bring in legislation complementary to theirs so that the mechanics, the machinery and the physical effects necessary for co-ordination can be put in place.

Marketing boards are far from new in this country, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, something like \$2 billion worth of production is being marketed through such agencies at the present time. On the basis of 1968 figures, this represents approximately 45 per cent of the value of farm products sold in Canada.

Mr. Thompson: Nobody is objecting to that.

Mr. Olson: Marketing boards are not new to producers or governments and we should recognize this and not try to distort the facts.

[Mr. Olson.]

This bill provides an opportunity for the agricultural industry, and particularly for the producers—I want to emphasize “the producers”—to work together when it is in their interest to co-ordinate their efforts more effectively on a national basis. I agree that there are complexities in the marketing structures today. With expanding production and a highly organized society it is important that we place our producers in a position to make whatever advances are possible in the marketing of their products.

Some members opposite have suggested that if this bill becomes an act it will give the government power to take over the agricultural industry. This, of course, is completely erroneous. If it were so, I wonder why provincial governments, with exactly the same kind of legislation on their books for years and having used it successfully in setting up marketing agencies, have not taken over the agricultural industry. There is no difference in their legislation and what is proposed in Bill C-197. This legislation only provides for control over interprovincial and export marketing, and gives the government no authority whatever to control marketing or production within a province. Besides, a government is presumably always responsible and responsive to the will of the people who elected it. When it is said that there is no response by this or any other action to Parliament, of course that is a denial of all the procedures we have to get men into this House and the procedures by which a government is selected from those men. That argument is not tenable.

It is our intention under this legislation to merely provide the opportunity for producers and industry to better co-ordinate their efforts across the country. I am sure this plan will make economic sense. Within that limitation it will let the industry exercise its own initiative in designing and considering marketing plans.

An hon. Member: That is what the amendment says.

Mr. Olson: That is not what the amendment says. If the kind of amendment we have before us was accepted, many other sections of the bill would have to be amended. In my opinion and in the opinion of provincial governments which have had experience with it, that kind of amendment is not applicable in practical terms. I have received a great deal of representation from people who have had many years experience in trying to administer marketing agencies.