

Mr. Don Mazankowski (Vegreville): Mr. Speaker, the bill before us brings back memories of the infamous Bill C-176 which was bandied about the House of Commons for a couple of years or longer, the bill which attempted to make agriculture a public utility, the bill which set out to impose a program of supply management and a system of production control on agricultural products.

Bill C-4 deals in part with that very act, the Farm Products Marketing Agencies Act. It has to do with the imposition of import controls on any product which comes under the auspices of that act. It seems strange to me that the government should be asking us to legislate in this manner today when we were told during consideration of the marketing bill in the last parliament that any provision for the implementation of import control was totally unnecessary.

It is precisely to this area that I wish to direct my comments this evening. I repeat that members on this side had very serious reservations about Bill C-176. In particular this question of import controls gave rise to misgivings. It was our contention that supply management would be totally ineffective in the domestic market unless some provision was made with respect to import control. Members of our party pleaded with the minister and with government supporters to remedy the defect but they declined to incorporate in the bill the provisions we suggested, displaying their intransigence and their stubbornness. They assured us our fears were unfounded. So when we look at clause two of Bill C-4 as it is presented to us today, all we can say is that it is a classic example of a government flip-flop, the sort of thing which has created such a huge credibility gap as far as any government announcement is concerned. It is a wonder to me that a government so narrow-minded and so afflicted with tunnel-vision has been able to survive for so long.

Tonight I wish to place on record some of the words which were spoken at the outset of the consideration of Bill C-176. The hon. member for Kent-Essex (Mr. Danforth) in his remarks on the second reading of the bill, as reported in *Hansard* at page 815, on November 2, 1970, stated:

Nowhere in this bill is there an indication of implicit power in an agency, council or even in the minister himself, to control imports. This is a major weakness. If you cannot control imports, it renders almost valueless attempted supply management. . . .

That is precisely the position we took. The minister of agriculture at that time was the hon. member for Medicine Hat. We are grateful to the present member for Medicine Hat (Mr. Hargrave) who drove him out of office. It is because of his intransigence and ignorance that the former minister is not sitting in this House. Thank God for the present hon. member who came upon the scene to relieve him, and also to relieve us. Anyway, the former minister said this, as reported at page 831 of *Hansard* for November 3, 1970:

I can also advise the hon. member, and I am sure this will relieve some of his anxiety with respect to the matter, that under these international agreements as I understand them, although there is some complexity about this, we can impose the same kind of supply management provisions on imports as are in fact applied to our domestic producers. That is the case with respect to some of the international agreements. It seems to me that here is a balance which allows us, first of all, to take into account the interests of our domestic producers and also

Export and Import Permits

allows us to respect the international agreements we have made.

I am not suggesting because it will be easy to do this in all cases, because of course different points of view are taken from time to time depending on a country's own interests. However, I would like the hon. member to understand why it would not be possible to transfer automatically to a marketing agency set up under this bill the authority to deal with imports. It must remain the responsibility and prerogative of the government to change tariffs, or to change the impediments to trade coming into Canada, if you wish to call them that. I suggest that one can be made compatible with the other.

We then took that argument into committee. As hon. members recall, the Standing Committee on Agriculture dealt very extensively with Bill C-176, and this same argument was put forth in the committee when the hon. member for Battle River at that time, Mr. Downey, posed these questions to the chairman of the committee. I quote from page 25:24 of the proceedings and evidence of February 25:

● (2130)

—I was going to propose somewhere in the bill in regard to import controls. At what point or after what existing clause does he feel this would be appropriate.

I think it very important that we consider this matter at the present time because of the parallel situation we presently have going on in the Finance Committee, with the Textile Bill presently before it. During our hearings it was said many times that production controls were not practical without import controls.

Mr. Downey went on to address a question to the minister as follows:

Does the Minister feel that there is some degree of acceptability in this type of an amendment? Do you feel that it may be practical?

Mr. Olson then replied:

No, Mr. Chairman. I do not think it ought to be in the bill and I have stated that many times before this committee. I have also stated under our international agreements that we have the power or the authority, without violating those agreements, to apply essentially the same kind of regulations to some imported products as we apply to the supply management of our own domestically-produced products. The Governor in Council could delegate that kind of authority for administration if he chose to do so.

Mr. Downey then went on to state:

Mr. Olson, the same type of import tariff controls exist in the textile industry. Are you saying as Minister of Agriculture that you would not support the same kind of extra controls and protection for the agricultural industry in Canada that you were prepared to support as a member of the government for the textile industry?

The then minister, Mr. Olson, replied:

We have done this, Mr. Chairman, with many agricultural products including dairy products and grain products.

What the minister was really saying, then, is that there was no necessity for providing import controls in respect of the items that would come under the aegis of the agricultural products marketing bill.

It was at the report stage that the then hon. member for Battle River, Mr. Downey, moved another amendment to the Export and Import Permits Act which in fact would have achieved the same purpose that the provision in clause 2 of this bill attempts to achieve. At that point in time this amendment was voted on and defeated.

I simply want to point out that although members on this side of the House were accused during the consideration of that bill of filibustering and blockading, I remind