

*Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill*

something that is more rewarding and beneficial for farmers than taking part in this decision-making process in the House of Commons which brings into fruition this marketing bill.

Let me assure the hon. member for Kent-Essex, a man whose personal integrity I respect very much, that surely he will be fair enough to recognize that no one on this side has ever said—at least, I have never heard it said by anyone on this side—that this bill would be a panacea and solve all agriculture's problems. It will provide the framework under which the provinces or groups of agricultural producers could, if and when they wanted, get together to direct the marketing of their own products. No one says that somehow this would solve all the agricultural problems in Canada in total. Obviously this is not so.

If the hon. member were here—he may have been—when I had the privilege of addressing this House on Tuesday he would know I was one of the members who pointed out with all the emphasis at my disposal that we must be doing more than just passing this single, admittedly limited, bill. I am one of those who has been very critical and very impatient with some members of the opposition who have attempted to hold up the bill which, as the hon. member for Kent-Essex has correctly pointed out, is only a very modest step in the direction of improving the situation in the agricultural industry in Canada, and therefore one which I cannot see deserves any opposition at all. It should have gone through long since.

One reason for my entering the debate tonight is to make sure that the remarks that are on the record in my name from Tuesday are reiterated especially for the benefit of producers of beef in order—to use the phrase of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles)—to make it crystal-clear that never at any time was there any possibility of the beef producers being forced into a bill which they did not want.

In other words, there have always been since this bill came before the House at the report stage, and long since as the amendments came before the committee, adequate and complete assurances that no commodity group would be brought in until that commodity group wanted to be brought in.

I think this bill lent itself to being the victim of scare tactics because it was possible to say to people that somehow there is a massive scheme afoot, as the hon. member for Battle River (Mr. Downey) implied, to create a kind of total supply management situation in Canada and thereby place under a bureaucracy the determination of how much or how great a quantity of any agricultural product could be produced and marketed in Canada. This simply is not the case, it has never been the case, nor could it be the case. Surely every member in this House familiar with the agricultural industry or with how our country is made up and governed knows that many of these responsibilities and authorities are within the provincial realm.

Such members would know, therefore, that the federal government could not accomplish this kind of act even if it wanted to do so. The truth is that the federal government never wanted to and never intended to. Certainly the bill never indicated that the government intended to impose any kind of supply management on any group of producers.

[Mr. McBride.]

Another point which should be emphasized is the simple fact that in Canada we have thousands of producers producing products for a very small number of purchasers. This results in the simple situation that if the producers over-produce their product—and since we have very good farmers in Canada and good technology in agriculture we will automatically over-produce in respect of almost every agricultural product—they will find that there is a greater supply than demand. This can result in one of two things. It can result in chronically depressed prices with a downward spiral on income for farmers, which could be helped by the government, in some kind of autocratic, dictatorial sense, nationalizing the agricultural industry out of sympathy for the desperation of the farm community.

• (1:20 a.m.)

By way of an aside I would remind the House that I have really hardworking farmers who when I go out to talk to them say that the time has come when there is no hope of ever getting agricultural producers together, and the day has long since passed when there should be nationalization of agriculture. My response is that I do not favour it and the government in power in Canada today does not favour it either.

This leaves us with only one alternative, which is that we encourage farmers—that is not a good way to run human beings because some do not encourage very well, some will always oppose and some will block what you want to accomplish—but we must encourage farmers to bring some order to the marketing of their products themselves. That is the sum and substance, the aim and purpose of the bill before the House tonight. We want to encourage farmers to organize themselves so that they are not always the victims of the few purchasers; so that they do not always need to suffer because they know how to farm better. The situation in agriculture in Canada today is that farmers are suffering more because they are doing their job better. That suffering must stop, and the purpose of this bill is to give one more, as the hon. member for Kent-Essex (Mr. Danforth) says, inadequate, limited and imperfect but at least one more tool that can be used if the people of Canada who are farmers want to use it to attempt to accomplish what one member said could not be accomplished, in other words, some sort of rational coordination of agriculture across this nation.

Some people say, for instance, that Canada is a country that cannot be governed. One speaker earlier in this debate suggested that you cannot have any kind of marketing plan in Canada because of the diversity of regions and areas, and that it is hopeless to assume that some order can be brought to the marketing of a product in Canada. I am not so pessimistic. I do not believe that it is hopeless to have co-operation in this nation. I am not convinced that the people of Newfoundland, of P.E.I. and of Nova Scotia are interested only in their own provinces.

I hope that what I say in this House does not give any hon. member a foundation to believe that I am working only for eastern Ontario, and I speak of eastern Ontario because it is such a huge province that we tend to be a bit regional even within the province of Ontario. Surely the time has come when those of us in any region of Canada must be concerned about the national good, and in this case the national good of the agricultural community.