

*Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill*

Mr. Speaker, I have personally held seminars where I have had the opportunity of meeting almost all the farmers in my riding and discussed with them the long and short term effects of this bill. I believe therefore that my constituents and all those who read the reports of the standing committee on agriculture—and God knows how many pages they contained—and *Hansard*, know my position.

I can also state that it has been unchanged since I first took part in the debate on Bill C-197. The more I discuss it, the more I hold on to my opinion which is shared by others.

Mr. Speaker, I would call your attention to the fact that in the first speech I made in this House on the then Bill C-197 which is now Bill C-176, I expressed some misgivings because it did not provide any means of control on imports and exports.

I was saying a few moments ago that we have visited all the Canadian capitals to hear the briefs that were submitted. I shall give you a summary of the results obtained. We have been to Washington, Quebec City, Toronto, Winnipeg, Regina, Edmonton and Vancouver and have had the opportunity of meeting the spokesmen of 78 producer associations representing more than 90 per cent of Canadian producers. Of these 78 associations, 4 were undecided in respect of the bill, 31 were against and 43 were in favor. It should be noted that with some exceptions, all the associations which have replied affirmatively maintained their position provided amendments were introduced to the bill.

I think the same situation prevails among most members concerned with this subject. There is a fundamental difference between the government outlook and mine and that of many of my colleagues.

In my mind, the essence of the bill can be summed up in the four paragraphs appearing at pages 558 to 560 of a document entitled "Proceedings of the Canadian Agricultural Congress". That convention was held in Ottawa from March 24 to 27, 1969. If I may, I should like to call the attention of my colleagues to recommendations Nos. 104, 105, 115 and 116. I quote:

104—In this stage, which is simply a logical progression from Stage III, governmental control increases to the point where agriculture operates as centrally regulated monopoly. Government planners decide the types and amounts of production, regulate selling, set prices and rationalize marketing channels.

105—In return for submitting to a high degree of regulation the farmer gains almost total security in wages and rates of return on investment which are set by government organizations or appointed commissions as in the case of other public utilities. Although this would entail a high degree of regulation, the farmers would still retain ownership of land and resources and exercise a managerial function in regard to operating aspects that did not come under direct government control.

115—The relationships of government, farmers, and farm organizations in either system is somewhat ambiguous and in practice, authority and responsibility are not clear.

This is still the farmers speaking.

I continue to quote:

Both systems seem to result in much confusion as to objectives, policies, and programs. Examination of the trade-offs indicates the following generalizations:

116—If farmers want additional security they must give up a certain amount of freedom.

That is the part I do not like, Mr. Speaker.

The quotation goes on:

If farmers want a guaranteed annual wage and return on investment they cannot have high profits.

This is exactly what Mr. Ioanes said in Washington in the month of November.

And further on:

If farmers want government control, they must serve consumers and taxpayers.

That is obvious! It goes on to say in the final paragraph: If farmers want a high degree of government control, farm organizations will have to give up a large degree of their potential power, initiative and responsibility to government.

Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, this is not what is required by the farmers in my constituency. As I pointed out earlier, I have met almost all the farmers of the Richmond constituency and they object to the bill being passed in its present form. I have received hundreds of letters of protest of which several dozens come from my constituency. I would like to draw the attention of the House to one of them which summarizes rather well my constituents' views. It was sent by the Ferme Manasan Limitée, Aberdeen-Angus Enregistrés, Danville, Quebec and I quote:

Dear Mr. Beaudoin,

Needless to tell you that I have been quite disappointed to see your committee insisting on beef being included in Bill C-176. I cannot understand why your committee caused its members to waste so much time and spent so much money to travel throughout Canada to hear the "people's voice" and finally take no account of unanimous requests about the products involved.

If this is the *modus operandi* of politicians who believe they have been directed to protect the people against their own foolishness, it is easy to understand why the producers have little confidence in the committee's statement to the effect that agencies be created only at the producers' request.

To increase our fears, as Quebec beef producers, our minister says that he is insisting on beef being included so that he may use this as a tool in negotiations with the other provinces. Surely, you have enough imagination to see in what position this would put us.

Beef cattle producers are now setting up a provincial association which will start operating on May 17 next, and then it will be possible for us to speak with one voice, without having to submit to the censorship of our elected representatives.

And I must add, let us hope that it is not too late—

Sincerely yours,

Robert Laberge

Mr. Speaker, this letter is self-explanatory. I believe that the majority of Quebec farmers share to some extent the views of Mr. Laberge, of Danville, one of the most specialized producers in my constituency. For my part, I believe in free enterprise. I have worked hard all my life, and sometimes in difficult conditions, in order to remain my own boss. By far I prefer the individual freedom enjoyed by our farmers to a promise of uncertain and vague stability that could be the lot of some of them, especially the bigger ones, and the sure death of the small producers.

In principle, I have much greater admiration for the wild horse, free to eat what it wants, than the thin pig which eats whatever it is given and is obliged to haul a cart led by a driver who does not know where he is going.

I believe that many of our agricultural producers do not realize that the government control wagon will be very hard to pull for a great number of them.