

*Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill*

● (3:10 p.m.)

I think there are two objectives that need to be kept in mind as we consider this bill. The first is to ensure that the farmer is given a voice in marketing plans and schemes. As pointed out by my colleague, the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Gleave) and other members, this cannot be achieved simply by the government deigning to appoint this person or that person to whatever boards or councils are established. The farmers must be given an effective and meaningful voice in whatever agencies are established if in fact plans developed in the future are to do the job expected of them.

The second major objective that I think needs to be noted is that, in addition to the specific mechanics of any particular marketing scheme, the general scheme must be developed within the framework of an adequate incomes policy. The fact is that while marketing plans, marketing boards and orderly marketing as such can achieve the very worthwhile objective of strengthening the farmer's bargaining power in the marketplace, at the same time they do not deal adequately with his over-all problem, which is to obtain an adequate income in keeping with the over-all standard of living in Canada. It seems to me that only if these factors are taken into account can this bill be assured of any success. This is the only way in which those of us who represent farmers in this House can possibly support this bill.

Reference has already been made in the debate to some of the provisions in the bill of which I think note should be taken. The first one is clause 6, which sets out the duties and powers of the National Farm Products Marketing Council. The clause provides that one of the duties of the council is:

—to advise the Minister on all matters relating to the establishment and operation of agencies under this Act with a view to maintaining and promoting an efficient and competitive agriculture industry;—

As I stated last night, I have nothing against efficiency as such, so long as it falls within the framework of serving the social and economic needs of the farmers. Simply to speak in terms of efficiency of the industry itself is a very inadequate concept.

With regard to the objects and powers of marketing agencies that may be established under the terms of this bill, clause 22 provides:

The objects of an agency are to promote a strong, efficient and competitive production and marketing industry for the regulated product or products in relation to which it may exercise its powers, having due regard to the interests of consumers of the regulated product or products.

Again no real consideration is given to the needs of the farmer or the position of the farmer. This should be the primary objective of this bill. As I see it, there are a number of dangers in this bill. One is that too much emphasis is being placed on supply management. The whole idea of supply management is being considered in the market place. Supply management, in itself, is not an end. It is a means and should be considered only within the context of the over-all income, economic and social position of the farmer. It seems to me we must give very careful consideration to these aspects of the bill. I believe it is also necessary to take into account the problems involved in inadequate farmer participation which flow from the bill as it is now drafted.

I mentioned the whole question of the establishment of the board, the total power resting with the Governor in Council and the fact that these boards will be capable of taking a wide range of decisions affecting the livelihood and everyday life of the farmers across this country. This is fine and well, and provision is made for public hearings whenever a marketing plan is being considered, but I suggest there is one thing we can learn from our experience in dealing with federal legislation in the marketing field and also from the experience of the provinces; that is, there must be adequate provision for a role to be played by the farmers themselves when a decision is taken which affects their livelihood. This must be a meaningful role in which they really have the power to make their weight felt in respect of decisions affecting their livelihood.

It would seem to me that these are some of the shortcomings of this legislation. We have seen some of the shortcomings in respect of adequate farmer participation in some of the programs across Canada in the past and in one current program, operation LIFT. If the government had taken the precaution of having adequate discussion with the farmers affected by these plans and of having adequate public discussion prior to a final commitment being made to a program, a better program could have been devised which would not wreak the havoc which I predict operation LIFT will do.

The Canadian Wheat Board has been mentioned. Last night I indicated that I believed the Canadian Wheat Board deserved a great deal of credit for a job well done in bringing