

*Marketing Act*

having a representative of the minority or of other bodies not already represented on the board I believe that argument would be done away with to a large extent. In some cases the minority may number a third of the total producers, or even more. If my hon. friend took the notion a petition would not be needed; he has authority to act without a petition. On the other hand he might require one hundred per cent of the producers to be in favour of the scheme. I hardly suppose either of these extreme cases will come about, nevertheless the provision is there. I think it would reduce the opposition to a minimum if a flexible favourable vote were inserted, say from sixty-six and two-thirds per cent to eighty-five per cent, as I previously suggested. Then the minister would have discretion to choose between those limits, and he could also have a representative of the minority on the local board, which after all is the important salesmanship body.

If that were done it seems to me these complaints about coercion and compulsion would be very greatly reduced. There is bound to be an element of compulsion in any scheme of this kind; if no compulsion at all were exercised one man out of a hundred could hold up the entire scheme, which would be absurd. But if the favourable vote could be set at between sixty-six and two-thirds per cent and eighty-five or even ninety per cent, just to give the minister a range within which to choose, depending on the commodity in question and other circumstances, I should think an immense responsibility would be removed from his shoulders. I should think he would jump at the chance, because under the present bill he will find that he must assume a tremendous responsibility. I do not think it is well, either for the sake of the bill or for the sake of the minister, that he should carry such a responsibility when it can be so easily removed in the manner I have suggested. I am not going to press the matter; I simply felt that I would like to draw it to his attention.

MR. WEIR (Melfort): I appreciate the suggestions of the hon. gentleman. The bill is based on the assumption that the producers are themselves most concerned with the success of their scheme. Knowing the difficulty of forcing a group into the scheme, perhaps to a great extent against their will, I feel that the producers would be the first to realize the importance of securing their cooperation by having the minority name one member of the board. Perhaps in most cases these minorities will be organized in their opposition, and in that case it would

[Mr. Motherwell.]

be a simple matter for them to select a representative on the board. But difficulties may arise; there may be two or three groups opposing the scheme, or the opposition might not be organized at all. I had quite a definite constitution set out in the first draft of the bill, but because of some of the difficulties I have suggested I felt that it would be better to leave the question open in that regard.

Then with reference to the other suggestion of the hon. member that a range should be stated, between sixty-six and two-thirds per cent and eighty-five per cent; the difficulty I see would be this, that the eighty-five per cent would in each case, be held out and insisted upon by the minority, simply because it had been mentioned, and the sixty-six and two-thirds per cent might be held out by the majority because it, also, was mentioned. As I have stated previously I do not think many schemes could hope to succeed with less than seventy-five per cent, but after it gets into operation I believe the board will be in the best position to influence the formation of local boards under schemes, and to create as great a degree of uniformity as we could expect to have under the varying conditions. I appreciate the suggestion made by the hon. member for Melville (Mr. Motherwell), but for these reasons I believe it better to leave the matter open.

MR. NEILL: If the minister thinks that the first action of the majority of anybody would be to hasten to give representation to the minority, he has more confidence in human nature than I have. I have no doubt that the minister, in common with most hon. members, has advisory committees in his district to give him advice. Has he any recollection of such committees taking immediate or any steps to give the minority in his district representation on the committees? I do not think so. I think I am the only man in the house who tried to do that, and my efforts were not a startling success.

While I am on my feet I should like to make one last appeal in connection with a matter I have brought before the committee on two former occasions. I do not expect that the minister will yield now, but he might give at least some assurance. If he will not put my suggestion in the bill he might assure the committee as to his intentions. I would have confidence in the minister, although I know from experience that officials are not always bound even by assertions made by the minister in the house. I refer particularly to contracts. Some of the schemes may be put into effect immediately while others may not be effected for months or probably years.