

Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill

The benefits, he suggested, include "independence, fresh air, quiet and privacy and the intimacy of neighbourliness . . ."

This is what he is going to give them. They will get independence, free air, quiet, privacy, and the intimacy of neighbourliness where you know all your neighbours well. Lately the minister has not been speaking about those benefits, but the federal government has bluntly informed family farmers that they can no longer expect to be subsidized. The big farm cannot be run economically any longer. My point is that we should not remove these products from clause 2 of the bill.

Earlier today I was asked whether I did not believe that any price increase for the farmer would mean a price increase for the consumer. I say that that is true, that if the farmer receives more money, then obviously the consumer will have to pay a higher price. But I suggest that in the case of agribusiness the farmer may not get one cent more, though the consumer will have to pay a great deal more for his commodity. In the case of milk, which is a natural product which would be left in, if you produce butterfat from it you should be able to produce twice as much cheese from the same amount of butterfat as you produce butter.

However, what happens when agribusiness gets hold of it? There are as yet some butter factories around the country. As a matter of fact, the little butter companies are trying to buy butter from the government. They cannot obtain enough cream in their area to produce butter so they are buying butter from the government, which is stored in the province of Quebec in the city of Montreal. However, they have no control over the cheese industry, which is now big business. If Kraft is getting competition from them it buys them out, and this is true of other companies, including General Foods. They buy out the little producer and the little industry. They have raised the price of cheese until it is higher than the price of butter, although it takes twice as much butterfat to make butter as it does to make cheese. That is what agribusiness does, and the consumer continues to pay more money.

Mr. Mazankowski: Let us hear something original.

Mr. Peters: That is original, and it is a fact that has been stated by many agronomists over a long period of time. This is the first time in my memory that there has been an unreasonable relationship between the price of butter and the price of cheese. The hon. member probably comes from an area which does not produce either butter or cheese, and therefore he is not aware of this fact; but it is a fact, and it seems to me that this is something that even those members who do not come from agricultural producing areas should consider. Although a family farm operated at a very low return, and had the privileges and benefits to which the Minister of Manpower and Immigration referred, namely fresh air, privacy and the friendliness of neighbours, it was also provided with enough money to develop the farming industry of this nation. The family farmer sent his children to school, and some of them are now Members of Parliament. We have been able to develop a social structure in much of Canada that has been under a rural economy.

[Mr. Peters.]

● (3:50 p.m.)

I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that if this bill carries, the benefits for those in the agribusiness will be bountiful and substantial. If this bill carries, it will suit admirably the purposes of agribusiness in Canada. It will give that industry as much flexibility as people now enjoy when buying an automobile—a Ford, a Chev. or a Chrysler product. There was not much competition in this field, because the price to be paid has been agreed to. When Japanese car exports hit this country, their effect was such that the big three automobile manufacturers went to the Canadian government and got a 15 per cent increase in the tariff protecting them. I do not suggest that was bad. Perhaps that was necessary for the economy of this country. However, I suggest that if four or five big companies can control the automobile business in Canada and set prices, the same could be true of other products. For instance, members from Quebec could cite examples in addition to the two I cited to show that natural maple products might be affected by this bill. In many parts of Ontario as well people enjoy the fruits of the maple tree, so to speak.

Most of us do not eat oats, wheat or the other grain cereals unless they have been processed. It is fairly easy to roll oats; you can do that at home. Nevertheless, even though the "health nuts" may prefer them in the raw state, teeth do decay and it is necessary for some of us to eat processed cereals. There is little relation between the five pound bag of flour that your wife buys in the store and the five pound bag of wheat that was used to manufacture that flour. The price of the flour bears no relation to the price of the wheat, although the flour is produced from the wheat.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member. I must do so to advise him that his time has expired.

Some hon. Members: Continue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the House give its unanimous consent for the hon. member to continue?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Peters: Mr. Speaker, this is an unexpected privilege that I had not anticipated.

An hon. Member: You can speak now for 24 hours, if you wish.

Mr. Peters: I realize that. May I point out that in establishing this marketing legislation we are doing something that will benefit the entire farming industry. I believe that the Department of Agriculture believes, and believes sincerely, that we cannot have 400,000 farmers in Canada. I also believe that the federal Department of Agriculture does not expect to wait for the normal process of attrition to eliminate 250,000 of our farmers. It wants to hasten the process by legislation.

I have always believed in marketing legislation. My father originally set up in northern Ontario as well as in southern Ontario milk marketing boards. Over the years he negotiated many of the fluid milk marketing contracts in those areas and consequently over a period of time the