

*Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill*

last meeting of the Canadian Agricultural Congress. I should like to quote from page 6691 of *Hansard* when on May 7, 1970, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) said:

I defy the minister to point to any clause of this bill which requires the council or anybody else to ascertain what the views of the farmers are.

On the same page the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) commented:

I ask him if he read clause 8(1) (a), which reads as follows:

"A public hearing shall be held by the council (a) in connection with an inquiry into the merits of establishing an agency"—

Is there anything in that statement that suggests the council needs to take cognizance of the views expressed at a public meeting? I think we should read the whole of clause 8 (1) (a), which provides as follows:

A public hearing shall be held by the council (a) in connection with an inquiry into the merits of establishing an agency or of broadening the authority of an existing agency to cover an additional farm product or farm products—

There is no reference to consultation with producers. All the council needs to do is hold public hearings to establish the merits of a new agency or give more authority to an agency to cover additional farm products. At the same time, at page 6691 of *Hansard* the Leader of the Opposition said:

It is difficult for me to believe that the Minister of Agriculture would seriously suggest to the House that that provision constitutes consultation with the farmers or requires in any meaningful way their approval of a scheme before it is adopted by the government.

Then the minister said:

There is more in clause 31.

So let us look at what it contains. It provides as follows:

With the approval of the Governor in Council, the minister may, on behalf of the government of Canada, enter into an agreement with any province providing for the performance by an agency on behalf of the province, of functions relating to intra-provincial trade in a regulated product or products in relation to which the agency may exercise its powers and for such other matters relating thereto as may be agreed upon by the minister and the government of the province.

● (8:30 p.m.)

The minister may try to tell the House he is trying to consult the farmers, but it is clear that clause 31 will restrict interprovincial trade and will give federal agencies all the power they need to say where a product may be produced and marketed. It is of little comfort that public hearings can be held prior to

the establishment of marketing agencies and plans for those agencies. Public hearings are not an integral check on our political system and in fact, according to the bill, public hearings do not have to be held if the minister and the marketing council do not wish to hold them.

It seems to me that this bill is too important and too far-reaching for the government to proceed now before national farm organizations and other interested Canadians have had an opportunity to develop and present their views. Further, the government must guarantee adequate time in committee for exhaustive representation and analysis of the contents of the bill. The Canadian farm organizations are only now meeting to discuss this bill and must have more time to assess the importance of it for their memberships and the farm community at large.

The government has been less than frank about the immense power Bill C-197 hands to the federal cabinet and its bureaucracies. The consensus we all share, that there must be on occasion and for a specific farm product a national marketing institution, is being used by the government to quietly pass a blanket bill that goes far beyond that consensus into the realm of state monopoly of the farming industry. This bill is not a device for farmers and government to get together and decide to organize national marketing structures. Unlike most provincial marketing laws that have been specific as to products, detailed as to power and restrained by legislatures and plebiscites, Bill C-197 frees the government to choose by itself a commodity to regulate, and by regulation, monopoly, levy and licence to determine who shall grow the product, what quantity and quality of product can be produced and to whom, where, how and at what price a product can be sold.

By economic force and law, the latitude of this bill would allow the cabinet to take over the responsibilities of the provinces, the farm organizations and the federal Parliament relating to the agricultural economy of Canada. Objectively, Bill C-197 has the same power as wartime emergency legislation and could reduce the democratic process in rural Canada to a position of meekly accepting government directives. It would be an irresponsible and reckless act if the government were to push this bill through now. If the government proceeds on the basis of the present bill, it will be asking us to give it the power to unilaterally turn much of rural Canada into a quasi-public utility and to