

Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill

• (4:40 p.m.)

The man who improves his breed of cattle, who is responsible for raising Herefords, Shorthorns, polled Angus, and Yorkshire hogs, has done as much for the human race as any men who have written bills of rights, nailed them up on church doors and retired to a life of ease in the cloister. Yes, they are noble men, but I still say the farmer has a right to his own destiny. Why not give it to him now? Why write a bad statute and then have to back down from it? This bill won't work. The farmers won't take it. You will have trouble, farm strikes and all sorts of difficulty. They will leave the farms in droves, and it will be difficult to get the sophisticated consumer, who lives in a high rise apartment or in a \$20,000 home, to go out and milk cows.

It is not that the Minister of Agriculture is some seven-horned monster who is going to trample on the poor little farmer, but I think he knows as well as I do that this bill is not palatable to the average farmer. Although it gives him a promise of orderly marketing, some promise of a basic price for his product, and a promise of an end to unfair competition among his own kind, it does not protect him from vertical integration, from the unfair competition of corporations.

I give one small example because I am a lawman or have been a lawman. I noticed one thing in the bill that might be easily skipped over, but it is important. In this day and age of a permissive society when we are sweeping out of the statute books all sorts of things, through this bill we are suddenly making it a criminal offence to break regulations made by professional people not of one's own calling. It is like saying that the carpenters will set rules and regulations for dentists, or that if you forget to light your bunsen burner at the right hand side of your patient instead of at the left hand side you will be liable to an indictable offence punishable with two years in prison.

It is easy for a little farmer to forget to stamp on a bag of wheat that it was grown in Alberta, but if he forgets, this is a criminal offence. But supposing some big corporation like Canada Packers forgets to say that pork products were brought in from the Argentine and sold on the Alberta market, how do you put Canada Packers in jail for two years? You don't. You have one alternative. You proceed against them by way of summary conviction, but you cannot send them to jail for six months, which is the usual sentence on

[Mr. Bigg.]

summary conviction. So, you look for the general penalty section under summary conviction, and I suppose you will find provision for a nominal fine. This would not be a proper punishment or a deterrent for offences under this bill. It is merely a licence to evade its provisions, a recourse which the poor individual farmer cannot use but which a corporation can use. This shows that the bill is not well drafted. If criminal offences are to be created by this bill, do it in such a way that the biggest offender will be vulnerable. The individual who has attempted to rob the Canadian people of thousands of dollars may receive a two year jail sentence, but what will the minister do about the big corporation? I do not know if a fine of any size would be appropriate, but a \$50,000 fine might be a deterrent. Why not stipulate that the fine will be rated according to the public interest?

The chairman of the proposed council will be in a position to act. He can appoint members to his council, and pay them. The farmers will have no control. The chairman makes regulations, and the little fellow who breaks the regulations goes to jail. I say that the minister should be consistent in this. If there are to be offences stipulated, then make the punishment fit the crime. If a corporation that offends under this legislation has its licence to market hogs suspended, that would be a deterrent. But is there anybody in Canada with the courage to carry this out? I see no reason why you should be allowed to put a small farmer out of business for raising two or three hogs on his homestead, while you allow a large corporation to get away with stamping C grade meat as an A grade product—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Order. I regret I have to interrupt the hon. member but his time has expired, unless unanimous consent is given to him to continue.

Some hon. Members: Continue.

Mr. Bigg: I just wish to make one more point, Mr. Speaker. Legislation to regulate marketing on a national scale is necessary, but not this bill. We need more time to examine the bill. I appreciate the fact that we have been given an opportunity to scrutinize the bill. I have told hon. members what I do not think is right about it. I think I am expressing a consensus throughout the country. Farmers do not like the way the bill is written. They would like to have their fears allayed. They would like more definite evidence of the participation of producers to make sure they