

Under the terms of this amendment, which I would commend to all members of the House, no primary producer group could be brought under the control of a government agency unless a referendum were held among the producers of the commodity concerned and a majority of them indicated support. This is a fair procedure; it is democratic; it allows the primary producer, whose livelihood depends upon this measure, to make the decision. I submit there is nothing wrong with this approach.

Already at the provincial level we have marketing agencies which were set up in this very fashion. Under the terms of this amendment commodity groups would not be expected to hold another referendum. They have already made their wishes known, and this is good enough for the members of the opposition. They have indicated that they want an agency, and therefore they should have an agency. Our antipathy to this legislation results from the fact that from the beginning to the end of the measure it is the government agencies, the government appointees, that will make all the major decisions with or without consultation with and consent of the primary producers. We contend this principle is unjust.

These are the two principles behind the amendment put forward by the hon. member for Crowfoot. I suggest these principles are reasonable and can be easily implemented. Further, they do justice to the primary producers who are asking for help in controlling their product. The amendment would not mean that the producers are told what to do; it would put a noose around the neck of government-appointed decision-makers.

The producers of this nation find it difficult enough to compete in the marketplace, to fight for domestic markets, to fight input costs, to fight rising labour costs and to fight to produce a better product both for the Canadian people and for international markets, without this type of legislation. They have enough battles as it is, without battling government bureaucracy, a government whose help they are asking for in order to combat the marketing trends they are experiencing today. The agricultural producers of this nation are asking the federal government to be their allies, not their enemies. They want to work with government and to have government work with them. They do not want to be directed and told what they can and cannot do. Primary producers in the agribusiness feel they are subjected to enough regimentation as it is. They are looking for a

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way to protect themselves and improve their lot; they do not want to surrender their right to make decisions. This is our primary objection to the bill. The government today gave an undertaking that it will not throw technical roadblocks in the way of amendments proposed at the committee stage.

**Mr. Baldwin:** It took a lot to drag that out of them, too.

**Mr. Danforth:** Mr. Speaker, we have been asking for this commitment for weeks. We have asked for it privately and publicly. It is on *Hansard*. Today the Government House Leader gave this commitment, and I think he gave it seriously.

I know that had the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) been asked to give the same commitment today, he would have given it. We have now had an indication by the government that it will accept amendments at committee stage of the bill and will hear any and all interested parties. If in past weeks the government had been correct in informing agribusiness across the country that the opposition were preventing the bill going to committee, that if the bill were in committee and would be well and amendments would be given serious consideration and the government would present the type of legislation the opposition wanted, is it not strange that the government should say today, "We give an undertaking that we will allow amendments and that we will allow witnesses to appear"?

**Mr. Whelan:** We do it in other committees, too.

**Mr. Baldwin:** We have seen what you do in your committees.

**Mr. Ricard:** You do not accept the reports of committees.

**Mr. Danforth:** I am satisfied that the government is serious about the undertaking it gave Parliament today. I am also satisfied that interested commodity groups will be allowed to make representations. However, I am interested indeed in knowing how the various commodity groups across the nation will be invited to make representations. The task force report indicated—and I am sure this is correct—that there are nearly 10,000 commodity groups, agencies and committees as well as 120 marketing schemes directly affected by Bill C-197.

All members of this House who are engaged in agriculture have been aware for some time that this measure has not been