

coming under this bill, then of course we will be satisfied. However, I should like the minister or officials of his department to appear before the committee and tell us what percentage of that product now goes through the public yards, what percentage of that product comes under the auctioneer's hammer and what percentage of that product goes direct to the packing houses and bypasses the public yards altogether.

I am concerned when a broker at the public yards in Saskatoon, the third largest market in western Canada, informs me that the volume of product coming into those yards is becoming less every year. It is not impossible that we may see a time when those yards will not be able to effectively establish a price and where the percentage of livestock going around the yard is a bigger factor in establishing price than the amount going through the public auction. These are the situations with which we need to be concerned. We do not consider the passage of a bill here as an exercise. This bill, if and when it comes into force as an act, is supposed to be able to do a job for the farmer. It is supposed to permit the farmer, rancher or producer to do a job for himself. It is the responsibility of the committee and this House to see that when the act is finally passed it is adequate to do this job. If it should be merely a façade, a structure which does not permit the effective intervention of the producer into the market so that he can act effectively on his own behalf, then this bill and the act which will follow it will be a failure and we will have wasted our time.

I do not wish to carry on any further, Mr. Speaker. I have made the points which I think are important in this House. The further discussion of these points can take place during the meetings of the Standing Committee on Agriculture.

[Translation]

Mr. Roland Godin (Porineuf): Mr. Speaker, I pointed out a number of times the anxiety existing among farm people, especially in Quebec. And at the present time, this feeling not only remains but increases on account of the dangerously deteriorating situation.

In fact, almost 6 per cent of the Quebec workers, namely the farmers, get only 2 per cent of the Quebec income, which is much below the essential minimum. Moreover, this very small income is very badly divided, which explains why many farmers survive only through chronic debts and social welfare allowances.

A detailed analysis of the many reasons for the gap between the farm workers' income and that of urban people would be difficult. Let us point out only that it was far too long considered as the result of a low level of education. Yet, within 20 years, that so-called inferiority did not prevent the Quebec farm workers from increasing their production capacity by 300 per cent.

The level of education does not give the reason for the level of income and schooling is not everything, I believe, especially in the agricultural field. Knowledge and know-how can often be learned more rapidly through other means when people are open to progress, even when such progress does not provide them with an adequate compensation.

Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill

The statistics of the governments of Ottawa and Quebec, as well as the Economic Council of Canada data, which set at \$4,000 the income required not to live in squalor, make us realize that only 13,000 of our 80,000 farms allow farmers to avoid poverty and enjoy an income comparable to that of other workers.

From 1951 to 1956, in Eastern Canada, 31,000 family farms were abandoned or sold for ridiculously low prices, which barely allowed second, third or fourth generation farmers to pay off their debts.

From 1956, the phenomenon was accelerated, the seriousness of which goes far beyond the tragedy it represents for the farmer who is forced to abandon his forefathers' farm. Those people who knew only one way of life, that of their own village, have no trade and cannot provide for the needs of a large family. However, they are nonetheless good workers, honest and respectable, and without a doubt mainstays of our social economy.

Agricultural conditions, because of the present system, force them to move to the poorer city neighbourhoods, and therefore to add, though they want to be useful, to the number of unemployed and ill-paid labourers, with all the social implications the situation entails, especially when it is not deserved.

It is unfortunate to see the farmers, who as a group fulfilled their role well and fed humanity, being relegated to the rank of herds sent from one pasture to another, increased or decreased, according to the whims of certain financial controllers.

Today, by introducing Bill C-176, the government is seeking the authorization to establish a National Farm Products Marketing Council which, in my opinion, will do nothing but add to the list of the Canadian government agencies, which are costly, heavy, cumbersome, and which take away the time, the energy and, especially, the freedom of citizens.

Under the flood of laws, boards, commissions, councils, the free enterprise system goes under. Referring to page 13 of the bill, one can read, and I quote:

The objects of an agency are to promote a strong, efficient and competitive production and marketing industry for the regulated product or products in relation to which it may exercise its powers, having due regard to the interests of consumers of the regulated product or products.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that to promote competitive production, privileges will be granted to those more clever in securing certain grants, namely big businessmen, those who can offer a return to certain political organizers. Thus, the weaker will fall and will have to leave their land.

The bill makes no mention at all of compensation in these cases and one knows that the government has no appropriate employment to offer at the present time.

I come to that premature conclusion because other agencies of the government give us that proof at this time.

• (3:10 p.m.)

And the best example of this is provided by the Department of Regional Economic Expansion, which