

hurry; we are short of time." Then why, Mr. Speaker, are we wasting our time debating this matter now, when it is a matter to be decided by the Supreme Court of Canada?

I heard a very prominent judge say that this will be the most important decision made by the Supreme Court of Canada in the last 50 years. I would say it could probably be the most important decision ever made by the Supreme Court, since confederation itself may hinge on the decision. The decision, in effect, may be on whether Canada is in reality a nation, or ten nations. If the decision is made that there should not be free trade between the provinces of Canada, then the die will be cast, separatism will spread and we will truly become ten nations. But if the Supreme Court decision is to the effect that there should be free trade between the provinces, this bill will mean nothing and the agencies or boards set up under it will mean nothing. However, if the Supreme Court decision goes the other way, in effect saying that each province is a separate nation, we will need something resembling an interprovincial GATT agreement and the provision in this bill giving provinces the right to opt out of any arrangement will mean nothing. In effect each province will have to become part of an over-all agency in order to get part of a national quota. Some provinces may set up barriers against the importation of goods from other areas.

● (5:40 p.m.)

We could very well run into a situation in the western provinces, where they do not have the people to consume the goods they produce and rely on the export of their farm products, where they would set up barriers to the high-priced industrial goods they have been bringing in from other parts of Canada. They could start looking to places like Japan and the U.S. and make their own international trading arrangements.

On many occasions the minister has made light of the fact that we need this bill to create another forum for consultation wherein the provinces can get together and discuss these trade arrangements and agencies. But we have all the forums we need now, and there is nothing to stop the ministers getting together. The creation of one more forum to solve the matter of interprovincial trade is only a joke. There are the federal-provincial conferences with ample opportunities for provincial ministers to get together. The argument that this bill will set up another forum is only a red herring and has no value at all.

The Supreme Court ruling which will be handed down probably toward the end of next month will be one of the most important decisions made since confederation. It will be the deciding factor on the way in which Canada will go. We have had many divisive pieces of legislation from this government. I think the official languages bill has been most divisive and this is substantiated every day. But no legislation has ever been brought forward that will be as divisive and detrimental to this nation as the bill before us.

Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill

To return to the matter of another forum for consultation, I think this is just idealism. In this regard I should like to quote from the *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence* of the Standing Committee on Agriculture when that committee met in Halifax on January 21, 1971. In answer to a question, Mr. Callahan, the Minister of Agriculture for Newfoundland, said:

Mr. Chairman, in the first instance I do not agree that the provinces are agreed on this bill. They are not. So far as I am aware, no province has come out and said, "We agree with this legislation", and I have already indicated that at a full meeting of the ministers six months ago—and I have quoted from the proceedings of that meeting—there was a consensus which, as I have said, is the lowest form of opinion, which seriously questions vital aspects of the bill, so I do not agree that the provinces are asking for this. I know what they have been asking for. I have been among them and I know what we have asked for.

If this is the way some provincial ministers see the bill, how can any new forum created under this bill sweep that away and make everything glorious and fine and create a wonderful agreement on the question of provincial trade? I do not think anyone here who truly represents agriculture would not support the bill if they could see that it provides one extra dollar for the producer. Where is there anything in the bill about pricing or giving producers more money in their pockets?

We repeatedly saw amendments turned down in committee. I recall an amendment to put the word "viable" into the clauses to replace the words "efficient and competitive", but the latter phrase was chosen. This would mean just another cheap food policy. Time and time again we have heard the word "efficient" used in regard to business where it generally means a greater profit margin, but as it relates to agriculture it can only mean a cheap food policy.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Downey: We were given no assurance that the word "competitive" does not mean competitive with another country. What are we to be competitive with—Mexican tomatoes, Australian beef? The terminology of the bill gives no assurance that this would not be the type of competition producers would have to face.

I think the most ridiculous concept of this bill has been the matter of controlled production, though quite a few people may not be in agreement with this. However, I think anyone could and should be ridiculed for bringing forth control of production without control of imports. This is one of the most ridiculous assumptions ever made. Surely the minister would not try to implant in the minds of the farmers that their standard of living could be raised by controlling production and granting licences to farm with no mention at all of imports.

The apple growers and beef producers appeared before the committee. I recall that the apple growers of Nova Scotia and British Columbia said they had no problems and did not need this bill, that the only thing they