

Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill

were holding it up. They were doing their best, they said, but the opposition would not allow the bill to go to committee. Well, look at the record. This is the first day upon which the measure has been allowed to come before the House since May 19, almost four weeks ago. We have asked for it both privately and publicly, but the government has refused to bring it forward. Now they bring it in—

An hon. Member: On a short day.

Mr. Danforth: They bring it in on the shortest day of the week and we can only debate it for about 2½ hours. There is something else. When they were telling the farm groups that the opposition were holding up this measure, members of the government were well aware that if the bill had been referred to committee on the day it was introduced, it would still not have been possible to act upon it since the committee already had a full program before it. The government had already placed the estimates of two major departments before the committee in addition to the estimates of the Department of Agriculture. They knew full well that consideration of these matters would take up all the time available to the committee in this part of the session.

If the bill goes to the committee this afternoon, the committee will still not be able to work on it; its members are seized with another piece of legislation. We who sit on the Standing Committee on Agriculture, aware of the fact that one group alone has proposed 83 amendments to a bill containing 114 clauses, fully realize that it would be impossible for the measure before us to be dealt with immediately—and so would anyone else who was acquainted with parliamentary procedure. Yet the government has the cheek to say, across the nation, "Put the bill in committee and you will have ample opportunity to fix up this measure to suit yourselves." That is utter nonsense. This is why I call the government's action cheap and contemptible. I do so because there are no other adjectives which can describe it.

Members of the government have told the producers—and they have put it in writing—that if the opposition would let this bill go to committee, all their amendments would be favourably considered at the committee stage. They said this knowing full well that since treasury expenditures are involved, amendments which could be entertained in committee are extremely limited in nature. But they did not tell the industry this. They did not tell the industry that on second reading the

[Mr. Danforth.]

principle is determined, not at the committee stage. Mr. Speaker, we have had painful experience of the type of bills which come out of committees, particularly committees of this Parliament.

We in the opposition are not trying to tell the agricultural industry the type of legislation it should have, but we are trying to give the industry the opportunity to express itself, to exert some influence with regard to the legislation with which it is to be saddled by the government. We are trying to give agriculture a break. How can we help these people if this kind of misinformation goes out across the nation? Leaders of the commodity groups, who do not have the time to spend on studying parliamentary procedure, of investigating the fine print and the reasons behind the positions taken here, must accept the information given to them at its face value. The information circulated amounts to misrepresentation. I have little patience with Members of Parliament who stoop to shenanigans of this type in exchange for a little political gain.

Mr. Olson: Then you must be mad at all your colleagues.

Mr. Danforth: There has been misrepresentation as to the amendment proposed by my hon. friend. The information given out was that the amendment meant there had to be a referendum among all producers from coast to coast before a marketing board could be set up under this bill. That is utter nonsense. The amendment deals with two principles only. The first is that primary producers should have representation on the boards of directors or on the councils and agencies to be appointed by the government under the terms of this legislation.

● (3:30 p.m.)

Secondly—and this is equally important—the amendment does not state as a principle that we must have a referendum throughout the nation before the bill can be effected. Yet this is the information disseminated by the government. I say it is misinformation, half truths, untruths. This amendment would mean—and every primary producer in the country supports this desire—that agencies would not be brought into being by this government by the stroke of a pen, by Order in Council, on the advice of a civil service bureaucrat appointed by the government. This is not what the producers want. They want a say in whether or not they have a marketing agency.