

*Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill*

good profit. I must say that it was good milk, much better than the coffee served in some of these eating places.

I diverge to describe this coffee, and let me try and draw a parallel from the past. Was it the great Stephen Leacock, in describing the weak chicken soup then being prepared by certain hotels, who said that this soup was made by boiling water on the kitchen stove, then rounding up a rooster in the back-yard and chasing him past the kitchen door? It would seem that some of the restaurants I have mentioned must make their coffee by boiling water in a percolator in front of a map of Brazil which is securely fastened to a nearby wall.

• (4:30 p.m.)

For the past couple of decades the farmers of this country have realized that in order to survive it is necessary to have extensive reforms initiated in respect of methods of producing and marketing farm products. The old hit and miss practice of a farmer trying to guess what the market might be in the next month, or three months hence, in the hope that the demand for his product would be high at harvest time no longer stands up in a highly competitive world. The successful farmer today practices modern business techniques. He is in fact an astute business man because he must be. But, Mr. Speaker, good business and production practices on the farm are not enough. These practices must be extended across the board. The farmer today must be an integral part of both provincial and federal systems that are designed to keep him informed of demands for farm produce, warn him of impending crises such as over-production in other sectors of the market, and offer guidance to the farmer in the preparation and movement of his product into the market.

These are the things that the farmers of this country have been asking the government to deal with. These are the problems that the farmers have been asking assistance in solving. They have been asking the government to establish a system of production and marketing policies that would lead to price stabilization throughout the farm product spectrum. What they did not ask for, Mr. Speaker, was a system such as that employed in Eastern European countries.

It is estimated that roughly half of the farms in this country or about 200,000 are in the single unit or family farm category. These are commonly called small farms. It is the small farmer who is most likely to be

[Mr. Alkenbrack.]

adversely affected by the operation of the Farm Products Marketing Council envisioned by Bill C-197. I use the term "the operation of the council" for a very good reason. As the hon. member for Dauphin (Mr. Ritchie) noted a few days ago when he spoke on this bill, the operation of the council will not necessarily reflect the policies of the government. The bill does not, in fact, set forth anything in the way of government policy with regard to the functions of the council. The most glaring deficiency in this bill—and this is maintained throughout the bill—is that the terms of reference for the council and for the resulting regulatory agencies are too general. There are too many powers allowed the council by this bill, and there are too many references to the broad and sweeping authority vested in the council to establish its own policies.

When a government can express its policies in vague and general terms, only one inference can be drawn by the observer; that is, that government has the power to do as it wishes and therefore cannot be forced to enunciate national policies in precise and specific terms. We are in such a situation today and I say again that the real victim will be the small farmer.

The hon. member from Dauphin also pointed out that the council, or any of its agencies, may determine for itself whether or not a farm is being operated efficiently, and may take whatever measures it deems necessary to correct a situation it considers unsatisfactory. Again, I say that this smacks of totalitarianism. This takes us back to an age pre-dating the free enterprise system. This bill will transport us backwards in time, and to another continent—specifically, behind the Iron Curtain.

The farmers of this country did not ask for this type of legislation, Mr. Speaker, and they will not sit idly by and let government bureaucrats move in and take over their farms and their lives. There are farmers in this country from Poland. They would never consider going back to Poland because in that country they would have to live and work under a system envisioned by Bill C-197. There are farmers in this country who emigrated from the Ukraine. They can tell you what it is like to have bureaucrats take over your property and your crops, and tell you how much you can grow and what you will receive for your product.

Our farmers want guidance and direction, as many of my colleagues have stated before me Mr. Speaker, but they do not want confis-