

Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill

friend from Newfoundland. I do not fear higher consumer prices. The farmers, regardless of prices that will be charged—prices within reason, that is—are to get a fair shake. For once they will get a fair return for their hard work in producing our food.

One of my hon. friends said tonight that he was afraid this bill does not control imports. May I say, because I want to be fair, that I am also a bit leary about that point. I feel that for the sake of the agricultural industry in Canada, just as we control, for example, the importation of textiles coming into Canada, sooner or later we have to take a stand to make sure that our farmers, whether wheat farmers from Saskatchewan or dairy farmers from Quebec, get a fair deal. I think we should to some extent control imports of agricultural products.

• (2:00 a.m.)

Mr. Bigg: Then why not put it in the bill?

Mr. Whicher: We do not put it in the bill because there are other bills which cover it. It is so obvious. I have all the answers, but I am worried about your questions.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Whicher: I simply say this, in conclusion. It has taken a long time to give the agricultural industry the things it has requested. We are doing so here and now, not just the government members but those to my left too, despite all the opposition they have put up. All of us are involved. I see the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) here tonight.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Whicher: He is doing his best for those in the agricultural industry. I have heard the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis) say on numerous occasions that farmers should be given a better deal. But where is he tonight when we are fighting for the agricultural industry? Somebody told me where he might be. I have no idea. Somebody suggested he might be in Malta. The British are supposedly moving out of there, and somebody else is moving in. I do not know what the hon. member for York South is doing, but one thing I do know: he is not looking after the farmers of Canada.

Then again, I note the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) is not here. I say this very respectfully because I think he is a fine gentleman. The other night I sat by my television set all by myself and heard him condemn the government for letting Parliament go away for six weeks instead of looking after the business of the country. I ask this question with all respect: Where is he tonight when the agricultural industry is demanding his attention?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Whicher: In case the hon. member for York South thinks we need him here, in case the Leader of the Opposition thinks we need him here, I want to tell them this: the members of the government side are here and we are here to look after the farmers.

For too long have we let them down, and I include myself in that category. For too long have the Tories, the Grits and the social democrats let them down. But we are

not going to let them down any more, starting tonight. I look around here at the front benches. There are more on the front benches of the rump than there are on the front benches of the rest of the parties. Very soon this debate will be ending. Very shortly the farmers of Canada will have the opportunity of getting something for which they have been asking for years and which they should have received earlier. Regretfully, they were not given it in the past. But, proudly, I tell Your Honour that as of tonight, because of the actions of the present government, they will get something which for the first time in history will give them an opportunity to go forth together with the other economic forces of this country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, even though it is late, it is a pleasure for me to rise and speak on this bill which to me is of extreme importance.

First of all, I should like to say that I was very happy indeed to sit on the Committee on Agriculture since I was elected to the House. I may indeed have been the only member to sit in two capacities on that committee.

I should add also that Bill C-176 had some bearing on a decision I had to make at one point. Concerned about respecting my commitments toward my electors, particularly the farmers, I had to make a decision because I believed and still believe in the value of this bill which was introduced some 18 months ago.

I do not wish to miss the opportunity of taking part in this debate, because as several other members I am clearly under the impression that I have things to say. The work in committee has indeed enabled me to understand the legislation better and I had realized for a long time that agriculture needed some governmental solutions.

A lot has been said about this legislation and since the beginning of the debate many serious charges have been laid by both sides of the House. I would like just the same to congratulate those who took part in the discussion, as well in committee as during the report stage and on third reading.

For several, the legislation is the source of much concern. Anyway, I think that the bill will be valuable inasmuch as it is applied by the responsible persons, the producers and different provincial authorities.

• (2:10 a.m.)

Amendments have been brought forward, some of which were very sensible. Others were not so brilliant. To say that the bill is, in any way, perfect would probably be exaggerated, because a perfect bill would be something like a miracle, and I do not think that anyone in this House could have proposed a miraculous solution. But between doing nothing and contributing something which seems interesting and most valid, one had to bring out a bill truly inspired by the difficulties which agriculture is facing in this country.

It has been regretted that this bill does not provide more money for farmers. I think that the marketing agencies will be able to establish a certain relationship with decent prices, which is what farmers are still expecting.

The hon. member for Compton (Mr. Latulippe) was saying, yesterday, that in the name of liberty, he was