

*Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill*

This is an awkward alternative presented not only by the minister but by the Prime Minister and the government. The government expects the opposition, which it has condemned in this statement and charged with obstructing the bill, to seriously consider this bill in committee if and when it is referred, although the government has emasculated and hampered it and will have made it partially inoperative before it even receives the sanction of this House. The government expects us to seriously consider its honest intent to bring the marketing of farm products in Canada under the control of marketing agencies in order to enable producers to do an effective job of marketing. I wonder who is being kidded. Anyone who is aware of the implications and interactions in respect of the marketing of farm products knows the various exchanges and the competition that exists between the producers and the consumers in the marketplace.

Following a constitutional conference there was a communiqué which indicated there was a consensus among the provinces that beef cattle and calves would be excluded. Yet following that communiqué the minister of agriculture for the province of Manitoba appeared before the Standing Committee on Agriculture and stated clearly and without equivocation that his government was opposed to the exclusion of beef cattle and calves under this legislation. The minister also said as follows:

It is our understanding that in the opinion of the government of Canada the current frictions between provinces over inter-provincial trade in agricultural products will be more speedily resolved through speedy passage of Bill C-197 than by reference to the Supreme Court of Canada. In our opinion the act will only achieve that goal if the proposed legislation is amended to clarify and reaffirm the principles which shall govern inter-provincial trade in Canada.

The brief goes on to say that they are in favour of a system of orderly marketing of farm products and are in agreement with the intent of the legislation proposed in Bill C-197. The brief states:

We are concerned, however, about recent statements that amendments to the act are being considered to exclude cattle from the jurisdiction of the proposed National Farm Products Marketing Council. The fact that the chaotic conditions prevailing in the marketing of some farm products are not present in the marketing of cattle is not sufficient reason for explicitly excluding cattle from a national marketing act which is, after all, enabling or umbrella legislation. Beef is an important farm product which is produced, marketed, and consumed in competition with other farm products; it cannot be said that there are no problems in the marketing of cattle which, at some future date, producers may want to tackle through action under a national marketing act. It is fairly well agreed that as long as producers do not express the need for a national marketing agency for cattle, no such agency will be established under the act.

That is fair enough, but the decision as to what products will come under the act will, hopefully, be made by the producers of those products. Let us hope this will be a decision of the producers rather than of provincial governments. This act is designed so that the producers, in co-operation and co-ordination with governments, can make the decisions. If this act becomes nothing more than a sort of convenience for provincial governments to solve internal differences in marketing between provinces

[Mr. Gleave.]

by setting up quotas and regional areas within which they shall function, it will not accomplish very much.

The minister, speaking last May to the Canadian Food Processors Association, as reported in the *Globe and Mail* for May 14, said:

—without “some form of intervention in the marketplace, the farmer does not have fair and adequate power.”

• (3:00 p.m.)

Now, does this apply to all products except beef? Is the minister, by virtue of excluding it, saying we need not be concerned. The packing companies now have substantial feed lots which they can use effectively in two ways. The packing companies can go on the market and purchase feeders and then, when those cattle are in condition, they can be brought back on the market in periods in which it would be advantageous to do so, thus enabling the companies to stay off the public market? Is the minister not aware that this is part of the picture? He apparently is aware that the situation exists because he so stated in May when he was speaking to the Canadian food processors. But is he saying to this House that this situation does not exist in this particular part of the farm industry and will not exist. That is what he is saying because he wants to rule out even the possibility of the producers of beef products coming under this legislation. He wants to place them in the position where, if they do have difficulties, they will have to come to whoever happens to be the minister at that time and ask him to open up the act and go through the exercise all over again.

I tell the minister that it is altogether unacceptable to our party that a measure as important to the farmers as this is should be dealt with in this shabby manner. Speaking at that same meeting the minister said:

Thus, while many food processors have objected to marketing agencies and their powers, they themselves have in effect adopted different techniques to much the same ends.

The minister says that this situation exists. Then he says, let us go ahead, but let us not make it possible for one of the major sectors of the agricultural industry to participate in this marketing agency. I think the minister, and possibly his government, are aware that there are presently rapid changes going on in the farm industry; that is, we are accelerating the trend toward larger units. The trend toward integration is also being accelerated and a situation where the processor integrates with the producer, where controls are exercised over the market place and where the ordinary free marketing system can not effectively operate. So long as a free marketing system operates effectively, the farmer then is in a position to obtain the price the demand creates and to get what may be termed a fair market price. But once certain interests are powerful enough to influence that market, to control the rate at which the product goes to that market as well as how it goes to the consumer, then we are in imminent danger of both the producer and the consumer getting a pretty raw deal.

When this bill reaches the committee, Mr. Speaker, I assure the minister we will require answers to the questions I have posed. If the minister can assure the committee there is no possibility of a need for cattle and calves