

Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill

Over and over again the minister has emphasized that this is a democratic approach and this will not be done unless the majority of producers wish it. I maintain that the minister immediately loses his credibility, because there is no doubt in anyone's mind that the majority of cattlemen in this country do not wish to come under the provisions of this measure. They have said so over and over again. They want no part of it.

Mr. Speaker, the government is interested in only one thing. It is interested in bringing a bill before the House in a manner which includes cattlemen whether or not they wish it. It is all very well for the minister to say they are only being brought under the umbrella of this bill and that it will not be implemented so far as cattlemen are concerned unless they wish it. What bothers me is that in the terms of this bill we are giving tremendous authority to public servants who are answerable only to the minister and this House. I am concerned that this measure is of such importance that if we should be wrong it could mean the economic ruin of hundreds and hundreds of farmers in this country.

I do not hold a brief for those who moan and whine about the length of time spent on this matter by the House and the committee, because if in our deliberations we can amend the bill in such a way that we save only one farmer from bankruptcy then in my opinion the time will have been well spent. If we make a mistake it could take years to bring in an amendment in order to redress the wrong, especially when we see the degree of esteem in which this government holds the farming community of Canada.

We must look at this bill very carefully. We will have to amend it in order that it can be operative and can solve the various problems facing Canada today. I am terribly disturbed that we have not been able to obtain a Supreme Court ruling on the very cornerstone of this bill before we are asked to give it final passage. This is major legislation.

I am very sorry the minister did not adopt a more moderate course in dealing with something which primary producers across the country have wanted for many years. I had hoped the minister would bring in a measure of national scope as he did in respect of the dairy industry and as was done in respect of the wheat industry.

If the government had brought in such legislation for the poultry industry, which dearly wanted it, it would have received rapid passage through the House. If such legislation had been brought in and operated successfully, then the other commodity groups would have been lining up at the minister's door demanding similar legislation. The minister did not do that. He is trying to bring it in all at once to cover a tremendous number of commodities and regions. This involves many different personalities and ten different governments. In my opinion it will be impossible to achieve rapid implementation of this measure once it is passed, because the problem of interprovincial barriers is growing each and every day and is becoming more and more ominous. I think it is misleading for the minister to say that this measure will settle the problem. Even if it did provide a solution, I submit it

[Mr. Danforth.]

would take a minimum of 12 months to draft all the regulations and negotiate them with the provinces. I have no hesitation in supporting the amendments proposed by my colleague.

• (5:30 p.m.)

Mr. Cliff Downey (Battle River): Mr. Speaker, I have great pleasure in speaking in this debate, not so much because of the content of the bill but because I wish to point out to the thinking people in this country what will be the effect if this measure is passed. I believe that the result will be a disaster. The bill was first introduced a year or so ago as Bill C-197. At that time the standing committee heard many witnesses. There was a general rejection of what that bill encompassed and we rather suspected that after it died on the Order Paper last June, on being reintroduced it would be redrafted and contain many improvements. It was very disheartening to see it come forward in this form.

The suggestion was made that this bill is a product of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) and he has received a great deal of the blame for it. It was pointed out earlier today that much of the thought behind the bill originated with the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and that he elaborated on it in a speech at Winnipeg on June 2, 1968. In other words, the bill was not proposed by anyone with an agricultural background but by what you might call a playboy from Westmount, a world traveller from Westmount. When you read the bill you can easily see that this was the case. To substantiate that statement I quote from the speech he delivered in Winnipeg on June 2, 1968, as follows:

In order to meet the difficulties of divided jurisdiction in the area of marketing of agricultural products, the government would undertake to raise for discussion with the provinces the possibility of providing over-all authority for the marketing of agricultural products as a federal responsibility.

That statement was made before the members of the present government knew they would be appointed to the positions they hold. I want to make it abundantly clear that the thought behind the bill did not come from the agricultural community. Marketing boards are not the main thrust of the bill. The main thrust will be restricted provincial trade policies and government control—nothing more and nothing less. The Minister of Agriculture has made many speeches to the effect that this bill is what we need. We will all wait with baited breath to see if the bill, when proclaimed, will solve the interprovincial trade situation, the so-called chicken and egg wars which have been developing and have given rise to increasing trade restrictions between provinces.

As has been so well pointed out by the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) and by the hon. member for Kent-Essex (Mr. Danforth), in reality the whole situation boils down to a decision that should have been made by the Supreme Court. In reality we are wasting our time in this debate in the House. Time and time again members of the government rise and say, "We must get this legislation through, or that legislation through. We are in a