

Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill

be necessary. This may mean that they will not act at all if there should be a provincial set-up. I realize that the provincial organizations are not satisfactory in respect of international trade because they do not have the power to legislate in respect of prices, marketing facilities and so on. The assurance I wish is that when this oversize board is established, it will be producer-controlled. I will sit down in a moment, Mr. Speaker, and give the minister an opportunity to reply. I should like the minister to assure me that this organization will be composed of farmers who will have an opportunity to administer their own affairs, just as they have had under the provincial marketing boards.

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, may I ask the hon. member a question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): The Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member be satisfied if I were to give him the assurance that in the initial stages particularly with the commodity groups, that by and large the members of these boards will be drawn from the existing provincial agencies.

Mr. Bigg: Well, Mr. Speaker, I am not satisfied with the words "in the initial stages" or "by and large." We are writing a statute and I should like to see in black and white that the farmers will have the power to administer their own affairs. I should like to see this written into this bill so it would then become a Bill of Rights for farmers. This could be a Bill of Rights for farmers if it were drafted properly or it could be a complete negation of all the farmers' rights if it were badly drafted. These are the things I am concerned about as I read the bill. I am only one of 265 members. I am on record as saying I do not like this bill because it does not, neither to my satisfaction nor to the satisfaction of those people who sent me here, set out that the farmers will have an opportunity to administer their own affairs. I see nothing in this bill which would give this assurance.

● (4:30 p.m.)

There has been a great deal of difficulty in getting to the point of agreement. Here, I am referring to farmers or individual workers, free enterprise people in their own right. It is difficult to get a consensus among them to give up their individual freedom within their own group, but to ask them to give up their

[Mr. Bigg.]

freedom completely to a group not of their own choosing is asking too much and is too dictatorial.

I see nothing in this bill, and I have read it through very carefully, to show that these people will have the right to choose the officers on this council. I might be able to stomach this provision in the bill if the chairman were only a bureaucrat with no voting rights, such as our Speaker, and were only there to see that everything went nicely while the members threshed out their problems.

Let these farmers elect their own executive officers. I see in this bill a great many more things than just administration. I see in this bill no less than the right to tax without representation, and the tax could be very onerous indeed. The taxes include the full cost of the administration of this council, the travelling expenses, and the salaries of the people whom these farmers do not even elect. Can you imagine the farm union of Alberta allowing some outside body to tell them how much they should pay their president or what his travelling expenses should be as he goes around the world to improve his education so that he can be a better president of the farm union? If they sent him to Japan to look for better facilities to sell their products, they would at least have the right to choose that person. But if he has the power, as I read it under this bill, to set his own wages and those of his help and to establish what the travelling expenses of his help will be—people who are not even of his own choosing—I claim that this is taxation without representation.

It is rather trite to refer to the Boston Tea Party, but that is how Britain lost the great colony of the United States. They were taxing without representation, although I do not think this was the only reason that the colony used as a pretext for cutting itself adrift. This is the type of thing which breeds secession and isolationism. People in western Canada today are in a bad mood and they do not like the idea of somebody, who is a vague person to them, dictating to them. Sometimes they include us in that category if we are careless. They ask: "Who is that bunch in Ottawa who allow people to tax us without giving us a say? Who are these people in Ottawa who are setting up a council to run our marketing affairs and not giving us the right to say anything about it?"

I have here a fairly innocuous piece of paper which says that all our intentions are good, that in the initial stages we will do