

Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill

● (8:50 p.m.)

I would not suggest that we go out consistently and overproduce in any line. I do not think we should plan for overproduction in this sense, but I do not think necessarily it is a bad thing when we do have an oversupply, except that the way in which we market our products can mean that prices will be too low. I cannot accept this as being necessarily a right way of doing things. It does not happen with automobiles. If automobile manufacturers overproduce, they do not cut prices very much. Maybe the automobile manufacturer will cut the price on one line, but not on all lines. In agriculture, the price of everything comes down.

I know there are other hon. members who wish to speak on this bill, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to dealing with it in committee. I have raised questions which I hope someone on the government side will answer.

Mr. Bruce Howard (Okanagan Boundary): Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words about this bill which is one I consider to be very important. As the hon. member for Battleford-Kindersley (Mr. Thomson) so kindly pointed out, I represent an area of the country that has had a great deal of experience with organized marketing and I would say a great deal of successful experience because organized marketing in the Okanagan Valley has served as a guidepost for agricultural organizations throughout Canada. The fruit growing organizations there have accomplished a remarkable thing with their central selling and marketing agency. They have developed a very close link between the customer, wherever he may be in the world, and the producer, the man who grows the fruit in the Okanagan Valley. I think this close link is lacking in the control of our agricultural marketing programs in Canada.

A few months ago I had an opportunity to travel with the Agricultural Committee into some parts of the Prairies. One of the things that impressed me was the lack of understanding between the producers of grain on the Prairies and their customers throughout the world. The attitude there seemed to be, "We produce it; now here it is, Mr. Government, go out and sell it. We don't care what you do with it in the meantime; just get rid of it. Don't bother us." One of the great benefits of a central selling organization, provided it is run and controlled by the producers, is that a link develops between the producer and his customer whereby the producer

begins to understand the customer's demands, he understands better what he should produce and how he should produce it and market it.

I heard some startling things this afternoon when the hon. member for Kent-Essex (Mr. Danforth) was complaining about government intrusion, through a marketing bill of this kind, into the affairs of the farmer. There was talk of government interference. We have heard all these phrases previously, yet what happens when there is a problem in the agricultural industry? Who comes to this House first to say, "We must hand out some money. We must do something to help the farmer"? The hon. member for Kent-Essex is right in there. He wants government interference then. He does not want government interference, regulations or any sensible control by the farmers themselves to solve their farm management problems.

I am not afraid of controlled marketing because I have seen it work. Many years ago when the program began in the Okanagan Valley during the depression years, the farmers were suffering badly. They got together and they said, "A cent a pound or on the ground". That was the beginning of central selling or orderly marketing in that area. Over the years it has become a very successful program. It has built an agency that has developed packaging programs, shipping, sorting, controlled atmosphere storage, educational programs for growers and all the facets of an advanced marketing system that is run and controlled by the producers, the farmers themselves.

Mr. Danforth: That is it.

Mr. Howard (Okanagan Boundary): I agree with you, and there is provision in this bill to allow and to encourage that to happen.

Mr. Danforth: You had better read the bill.

Mr. Olson: Somebody there has not read it.

Mr. Howard (Okanagan Boundary): Mr. Speaker, Dean MacPhee of the University of British Columbia produced a monumental report on the fruit industry in 1958. One of the things he said was, "Fruit growing may be a way of life, but it is also a way of making a living". I think that sometimes people in our farm communities forget this, when we hear about the God-given right of anyone, anywhere, any time, any place, to be a farmer and to produce in any way that he likes without regard to the effect that his