

do not see any need to bring witnesses, as has been done in connection with some other bills we have brought forward. I think hon. members, other than those belonging to the agriculture committee, will be just as anxious to discuss this bill.

Mr. VALLANCE: Might I ask the minister a question?

Mr. SPEAKER: I would remind the hon. member that the house is not in committee. The minister has moved the second reading of the bill, and he has completed his remarks.

Mr. VALLANCE: If the minister does not wish to answer my question I am quite content to let it stand.

Mr. HARRY BUTCHER (Last Mountain): At the very outset of my remarks, Mr. Speaker, I wish to say that I agree with practically every word spoken by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Weir) to-night. I agree as to the necessity for some action on the part of the government; I agree on the need for some improvement in marketing methods; I agree that there has been great wastage in our marketing practices and I agree that the producer must get more for his product if this country is to prosper. I agree that the quality of our products must be maintained, and I agree that three steps in that direction have been taken this session in the passing of the Dairy Products Act, the Fruit and Honey Act and the act with respect to live stock. I agree as to the merits of the co-operative organizations we have had in Canada during the past few years. Some of those organizations have been highly successful, and some have not been so successful. I believe that the organizations which have not been successful have failed for the very reasons the minister has described. I am convinced that there is great need for improvement in our marketing methods, but I am sorry to say I must disagree with the minister when he concludes that the bill before us to-night, if enacted, will result in very great improvement in them. I am a firm believer in cooperation, and without hesitation I say there is no man in this House of Commons who believes more than I do in cooperation between the producers and consumers, and on the part of all who trade with each other. I am not convinced, however, that this measure will in any degree or to any extent improve upon voluntary cooperation properly managed and well directed. I believe in government assistance to cooperation, but when we come to regimentation of men, as I fancy I see in this bill,

[Mr. R. Weir.]

whether proposed by people who believe in it or people who do not, then I most strenuously object.

In the preamble to the bill I find it described as follows:

An act to improve the methods and practices involved in the marketing of natural products in Canada and in export trade, and to make further provision in connection therewith.

If I believed that this bill, if brought into operation, would result in that which is set forth in the preamble, I would heartily support it, but unfortunately there are so many features in the bill to which I must object that I am going to accept the invitation of the minister and enter into a controversy here and now in connection with some of the principles embodied in it.

To begin with, I believe the main principle of the bill may be described as being one of compulsory cooperation, which I regard as a contradiction in terms, although it is an expression commonly used. I do not think that the people of Canada are yet ready for this type of legislation. I am not willing to believe that it would be acceptable to the people of Canada as a whole. I know that from east to west much approval of the bill has been expressed. The subject with which most of the people in the prairie provinces are concerned is that of wheat, and at this moment many of the farmers regard this measure as applicable principally to that commodity. In supporting the measure now before us they have in mind the old wheat board which functioned some years ago, and regard this measure as a sort of reincarnation of that board. However I cannot imagine any two bodies which could be more different than a board under a marketing scheme to be set up under this bill and the old wheat board to which I have just referred. In my view there is no comparison at all. When the wheat board was operating no restrictions of any kind were placed upon the grower. On the other hand, he was encouraged to increase his acreage; he was encouraged to grow as much wheat as he possibly could. The desire of the country and that of the allies was that as much wheat as possible should be raised in Canada. The farmer in those days could grow as much of any variety of wheat as he wished. He was assured of a market for every bushel of it. Best of all he knew he would receive a big price for his product. The farmer to-day has in mind that some of those results will be achieved through this legislation. In my opinion however exactly the reverse will be the case. I firmly believe that the farmer who acquaints himself with the provisions of the bill will