

Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill

ours, and their peak production of lettuce coincides with our initial production.

• (6:00 a.m.)

Any government-established agency which could control total export and domestic production using supply management and other tools available to it would have to be in a position to make recommendations, probably in a very direct manner. Under the arrangements now existing, producers ask the government to place a restriction on certain imports and perhaps four or five weeks later restrictions are applied. The government, for its part, will need to exercise some overriding control beyond the power of the board.

I presume we have given the Dairy Commission the kind of control I have mentioned and that the commission exercises it in an organized way. The commission assesses the potential in the export market and in the domestic market and has imported directly in the last few years. It seems that the estimate made by the board has not placed us in a surplus position. I am using examples which are national in scope. I imagine the Wheat Board is armed with regulations which prohibit the importation of grain. There may be some arrangement under which, if we were short of wheat, particularly of seed for example, importation could be authorized. I am sure such a decision would be made by the board itself and not by virtue of tariff arrangements. The point I wish to make is that this question should be referred back for further consideration. It is not all black and it is not all white.

Mr. Major: Two more years!

Mr. Peters: Well, we have been waiting for this for a long time. I am sure the hon. member could mention a number of commodities whose production is not controlled and where imports are a major factor. Wine has been mentioned as an example, with particular reference to Quebec. The province of Quebec has established a Liquor Control Board. If an individual wishes to import wine from France he would find, if he made inquiries, that he is not allowed to do so because it is the board in Quebec which decides in what circumstances alcoholic beverages can be imported. The hon. member shakes his head. Maybe somebody, in some circumstances, can import directly. I suppose there is some importation from St. Pierre and Miquelon. But in the main the board which controls distribution also wishes to have some say as to what is imported in that field.

If the government does not see fit to accept the amendment put forward by the hon. member for Richmond (Mr. Beaudoin) it will still be obliged to give consideration to the idea behind it. Even in the field of eggs and poultry the problem raised is an immediate one. I am told that if the duty on eggs were to drop by a cent and a half, there would in a very short time be no egg producers in business in the province of Ontario. The industry is operated almost entirely behind a tariff preference of 1½ cents per dozen. If we gave four or five major companies the right to decide what could be imported, being competent businessmen they would no doubt say, "Let us raise the tariff some more, and the price is bound to go up still further." So the prospect of competition would not keep prices down at all.

The threat of importation is a deciding factor where prices are concerned. Whether the government accepts this amendment or not, it will not be able to avoid considering some type of control, whether indirect, based on a recommendation from the agency to the government, or more directly by a direction to the agency to regulate importation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, since it is 6.10 a.m., I have no intention of delaying the House. I think however that this amendment is very important.

I have always been very much concerned about these imports that glut the market in Canada, and I shall not accept that the bill be referred to the committee, but on the other hand, it is very difficult to support this amendment. I think that most producers definitely need this bill, and it would be very difficult for me to support this amendment. However, before it is put to the vote, I should like the hon. Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) to tell the House what will be the responsibility of the Marketing Council with respect to imports.

I certainly hope the marketing agency will have the necessary power to prevent the oversupply in our Canadian markets we have witnessed for a long time. An explanation on the part of the Minister of Agriculture could help me make up my mind about the amendment; but, in any event, the bill is of such importance that surely I could not agree to support the amendment, in view of the fact that the farmers expect its passage.

I would very much appreciate the Minister of Agriculture giving us his point of view on the potential advent on our markets of imported products and on the powers of the marketing agency with regard to those imports.

I trust the Minister of Agriculture will be able to enlighten us before the question is put.

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, I had hoped that the minister would accept the invitation of the hon. member for Joliette (Mr. La Salle), but I would still like, for no more than two minutes, and while supporting the motion of my hon. colleague from Richmond (Mr. Beaudoin), to explain once more than objectives which we are pursuing.

We do not want to control the import of farm products at all. This is not the point. What we want is for import licences which will be granted to compel importers to subject imported farm products to the same control as Canadian farm products.

Yesterday, I think—we can now say yesterday indeed!—my hon. colleague from Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) gave a striking example in this connection concerning the import of wines and spirits.

We want the same thing in regard to imported farm products. We are not trying to prevent or limit imports of farm products, but we do not want imported farm products to come and invade Canadian markets at lower prices.

If imported farm products are not subject to the same regulations as Canadian farm products, this act will be void and useless. If the amendment which we are proposing is passed it will protect consumers as well as producers. We know that until now some importers have had