

*Private Members' Business*

little potato board from Prince Edward Island or Manitoba the farmers very quickly find that they do not have very much clout when it comes to dictating terms of price and terms and conditions of how many potatoes will be produced, how they will be produced and what price the processor will pay for them. The people who are handling fresh potatoes to supermarket also have extremely large bargaining clout in that there are very few supermarket chains across North America that the producers must face on a day to day basis.

The marketing agency can provide the management of the product to the final destination on time and at the most beneficial price to the producer rather than always at the behest of the various buyers who can very quickly take advantage of a day when individual producers through their own unco-ordinated activities may be offering—usually they are offering—far more product on any given day than the system needs. Therefore they are always accepting a much less than optimal price because they are presenting for sale far more product than they are able to sell and deliver. As far as the buyer is concerned that surplus of product is always available to them. They take advantage of that, keeping the price lower than it would otherwise be.

Management of supply is more possible under marketing boards. I would note that we have other ways of managing supply. Notable and somewhat ironic, given their long opposition to any legislation that would permit supply management for all general farm products including beef, are the official cattlemen associations based in Alberta and to a certain extent in southwestern Saskatchewan. They have always argued that they are free marketers, that they do not want to have anything to do with supply management. It is ironic and somewhat instructive to note that they are probably one industry that has been very effective at controlling supplies into North America, particularly the Canada-U.S. markets. They have managed by other means to put political pressure where it matters and have limited on a consistent basis the amount of imports, whether from Ireland and the European economic community or whether from New Zealand and Australia. By setting quotas on those imports they are indulging in supply management.

• (1120)

The advantages of the seller versus the buyer are being eschewed by cattle producers in most areas right now. For some time there was a very effective marketing agency in Saskatchewan that was strictly voluntary where producers could market through the beef marketing commission and that gained quite a lot of acceptance and approval. However, for political reasons that was struck down by the government of Grant Devine a few years ago. Farmers are now back in the business of negotiating their own prices each day. They find, when they compare notes,

that they are not being treated equitably for the same day's market.

I found when I began drafting this legislation that the simplest answer would have been to amend the Natural Products Marketing Act so that we pull out the sections the cattlemen insisted on being in there in the early 1970s which would have had the effect of permitting all fruits, vegetables, tobacco, farm products, honey, meats, cereals and oilseeds. Every farm product would have been the simplest solution but I was told that this would somehow impinge upon the royal prerogative because a small section of that act permits the government to finance such new agencies. Private members do not have the privilege of establishing a law or adding to a law that would perhaps cost the government some money out of the consolidated revenue fund.

I have had to resort to setting up what is, I admit, a shell agency that has no funds. It would simply exist and be funded by producers as the provincial agencies decide to become part of a national agency and use this as a forum or beginning again a debate as to whether producers of potatoes would have some benefit by using a national marketing agency.

This has been a program that many producers have engaged in several times in the last couple of decades. In the early 1970s there was a determined effort to put together a national marketing agency for potatoes. The legislation was being worked upon. The plan was being worked upon. A very detailed proposal was put forward. Somehow it fell apart. Twice since that time similar efforts have gone forward, only to be stopped at the political level.

I wish the new group of parliamentarians in the House now—almost 200 people who have never been here before—would again think about the issue, look at the possibilities here and bring agricultural marketing into the 20th if not the 21st century and bring us up to date with the corporate sector which for more than 500 years has had the ability to simply go to government and get immediate acceptance for its application to allow many people to come together under one agency and take advantage of all of the benefits that such a coming together reaps.

By persisting on keeping the old National Products Marketing Act which was flawed from the beginning on the books would be something like going back in time and saying corporations can be established but only to gather and market furs, because in Canada the Hudson Bay Company was one of the first corporations to function on our soil even though the idea of a corporation had existed in Europe some time before.

• (1125)

It is time for us to be brought up to date to permit our farmers to use all of the tools that their competitors and their opponents in the market have. I would urge members of Parliament to