

Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill

are holding a reunion to say farewell to the family farm, and a lot of nonsense like that.

As one of my constituents said to me many months ago when this bill first came before parliament, the only freedom Canadian farmers really have today is the freedom to remain poor. If they wish to preserve that freedom, if farmers wish to remain poor in their thousands, as autonomous, separate businessmen, they will continue to place themselves entirely at the mercy of those who buy their products.

It is to the advantage of those who buy agricultural products to keep production chronically out of line with the demand, so that at all times products can be purchased at a much lower price than would otherwise be the case. The farmers I represent have learned from bitter experience that when prices fall, usually as a result of over-production, a farmer has two choices; he can either go out of business or he can work harder and produce more. In effect, he is running faster to go slower, because although he will be working harder and longer he will probably be making less. Farmers are doing this because the government has been too slow, too inept, about bringing in adequate farm legislation. For this, it should be roundly condemned. It seems passing strange that, when we do bring in a bill, hedged around with guarantees for minority groups, regional groups and others, even though I would say it is very likely inadequate, we should get into a two-year filibuster, a bunch of nonsense about forcing small farms out of business, and so on.

● (5:30 p.m.)

All we have to do is block this bill for a few more years and then there will not be any more small farms. They are scarce now. The time has come when more of us ought to be prepared to say in this House and outside that regardless of any group of people in this Parliament, we ought to bring this matter to a vote and arrange things so that we do not discriminate against any product. In other words, no single product should be excluded from the bill, so that any group of producers of any commodity could come under the bill and have the advantages of it.

To allege that democracy is somehow being destroyed and the moral fibre of farmers is destroyed by saying to them, "If you want to improve your lot, we will help" is something that I fail to understand. How the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) and others can stand up with straight faces and their supposed concern for agriculture and speak this nonsense is beyond me. They say, in effect, that the government has this bill as one part of a total package, which is to remove all people from rural Canada. This is absolutely not true and the hon. member ought to know that. The day comes when you stand up and say, "We are not here to fight for the big boys; we are here to fight for the little people, the people who are the backbone of agriculture".

Some of the fellows from the Prairies over there leave it to people over here like myself to defend western Canada. Where are the people from Nova Scotia and rural Alberta who should be prepared to get up and say, "I believe in the small farmer enough that I want him to have some legislation." I realize that this bill is inadequate and that it should be stronger, but I am for it. If you want to attack this government it should be attacked solely on the

[Mr. McBride.]

ground of this legislation doing so little to enable farmers to help themselves, instead of being condemned for doing too much. How can you be doing too much when farm incomes in Canada are too low? How can you be going too far when you are saying that you want the benefits to apply across Canada? We will give them to you.

The time has long since come when members of Parliament ought to ask themselves whether it is enough to assure their re-election in a rural riding by telling a bunch of half-truths or even untruths about the terrible situation of agriculture and by attempting to pretend that the difficulties this modern era has brought to agriculture are created by the present government, and that if this government is about to move to alleviate some of those difficulties it has to be stopped, otherwise the farming community might realize that we are trying to help their situation. I think that is the cheapest, most petty and most despicable type of politicking ever perpetrated in Canada. There is far too much of this going on in the rural communities of Canada just for the sake of political gain, to the effect that it is to the advantage of some people to keep the farmers in poverty.

If you want to condemn this bill, why have you not got the courage to say that it is inadequate and that you want more for farmers, not less? Why hold it up for two years? Why be so concerned with beef? Why not leave it to the beef farmers: if they want it, let them have it. If they don't want it, they won't get it. If the farmers of Canada are begging for help, why block it? Why not say, "The time has come when the farmers of Canada need assistance". Why condemn the government for not giving it to them? Why ruin your Christmas recess in order to ensure that somehow the farmers continue to suffer enough that you can continue to create the false impression that it is the government's fault and if only you were in power you would correct the situation? This is unmitigated nonsense, Mr. Speaker, and surely the people ought to recognize it.

I appeal to the House not to emasculate this bill, not to take any commodities out of it. There are safeguards in it to ensure that no commodity will be included unless it wants to be. Let us leave it that way. Let us do something for the farmers, and do it now.

Mr. Paul Yewchuk (Athabasca): Mr. Speaker, it has been some time since Bill C-176 was last before the House and I must admit I have some ambivalent feelings about seeing it back again today. It is like meeting an old acquaintance who has been away on a long voyage.

Amendments Nos. 1, 5 and 22 have been put forward by the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner). My purpose today is to speak in favour of these amendments. Basically, what is at stake in discussion of this bill is the question of free trade among provinces. Also at stake is the principle of free enterprise which the farmers of this country have enjoyed ever since Canada in its present form was established. Through Bill C-176 the government hopes to impose a bureaucratic, political solution on the issue of free trade among provinces as well as that of free enterprise in the agricultural industry.

We in this party believe that policies which encourage aggressive and imaginative marketing should be instituted for the benefit of the producer. But we do not believe that Bill C-176 is the kind of imaginative marketing solu-