

*Parity Prices for Farm Products Act*

positive and to be a good thing for agriculture, if we look at the Bill a little more closely, we realize that there are a number of problems and shortcomings.

One of those shortcomings is when he says we could set a parity price for grain.

I think the Hon. Member conveniently forgot that as far as grain is concerned, Canada is a net exporting country. This means it produces more than it consumes. Anyone with any notion of agriculture will realize that Western Canada is famous the world over for the quality of its products and for the productivity of its grain acreage. Introducing the concept of parity pricing would involve, as was said by the previous speaker for the New Democratic Party, or at least that is what he tried to prove, some kind of supply management, marketing boards or joint programs. At this point, there is a very fundamental question we must ask, and I saw no mention of this when I read the Hon. Member's Bill. What are we supposed to do with our overall domestic grain production as proposed in the Hon. Member's Bill? What will we do with the surplus? If we have a joint program, if we have supply management, we will obviously make production subject to the needs of the Canadian consumer.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian market is about 26 million. That is a far cry from 225 million Americans or 320 million in the Common Market. And that is why I would have liked to see the Hon. Member's Bill reflect how he intends to oblige certain farm producers and family farms—a subject dear to the previous speaker—how is he going to oblige these producers to get out of production or cut back on production. What are we going to do with our vast Canadian prairies? How are we going to make these farms profitable?

Mr. Speaker, it is very easy to suggest joint plans and supply management, but it requires organization and planning. If we look at what happened in the past, we realize that supply management and quotas were not introduced in a day and especially not as a result of imposing a Bill as proposed by the Hon. Member for the NDP. I say “imposing” because this Government, the Progressive Conservative Government, and the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) have always said they would give farm producers the marketing boards they wanted, provided they covered the majority of production and the majority of producers. We have imposed nothing and we are not going to. We are working in co-operation with the provinces and agricultural producers in the area concerned.

Mr. Speaker, when we are very close to agricultural policy and problems, we realize one thing, and it is that parity pricing for grain will create a tremendous problem. It will be tantamount to taking the present problem, an international problem with an international context, namely the war between the Common Market and the U.S., and trying to solve it according to the philosophy of the Opposition which says that Canadian agriculture must have additional funding because the family farm is in danger.

Mr. Speaker, I think that New Democratic Party Members should realize that the Bill introduced by the Hon. Member for Yorkton—Melville advocates a medium—or long-term decline of the western agricultural community, lower production if you will, because the measure implies that it will eventually be possible to set up joint projects. That being so, Mr. Speaker, I wonder how and under what principle the New Democrats will be able to defend Canadian farmers, particularly in Western Canada.

As you would know, Mr. Speaker, setting up a joint project or establishing marketing boards is a lot more complicated than drafting a simple piece of legislation. The matter has to be debated first. We have to sit down with the agricultural producers. First, they must discuss the matter among themselves because—and the NDP Members may not know this—there exists considerable regional disparity from the Atlantic to the Pacific, including Quebec, Ontario, and the Prairie Provinces. Needs are wide-ranging and differ from one region to the next. Each province has its own priorities, even with respect to the same products. Given such a legislative measure as the one proposed by my colleague from Yorkton—Melville, we must wonder how we can achieve a symbiosis of all provinces and all producers and end up with a combined, joint and effective production effort, a production geared to the needs of the Canadian market first, and second to the needs of the export market. It may be a cinch to envisage this project within the parameters of a legislative measure, but seeing it through in the agricultural field, as it were, is something else again. The wide variety of joint projects and marketing boards set up in recent years will attest to that.

NDP Members who are interested in agriculture are fully aware of this. Let us take milk as an example, Mr. Speaker. How long did dairy producers have to sit down to discuss and negotiate with the federal Government and the provinces to agree on fair sharing—historic sharing, some would say—of the domestic production, to base the once disorderly total production on the needs of the Canadian market? It took quite a few years and was not accomplished through a legislative measure. Far from it. This was done on the basis of negotiations and consultations, and above all on the basis of the needs of the Canadian dairy industry as a whole, arising from the uneven production levels that were the norm in the dairy sector.

Mr. Speaker, the same applies to all production units that have marketing boards today. And this Government, the Progressive Conservative Government, never said it would not set up marketing boards. On the contrary. It has just set up a marketing board for incubated eggs because the producers asked us to and because overall production was in danger . . . We met with the producers, who said: Yes, this is the right time. Yes, we are going to sit down and negotiate. That was done. We may see one for potatoes. But above all, Mr. Speaker, I feel that the basic integrity of Canadian agriculture is to let the farmer set his own goals and determine what kind of marketing boards he wants, if any, so that the ten provinces