

Anti-Inflation Act

government with regard to exempting farmers and fishermen is just a sham. We should not forget that the farm marketing board is right beside the farm gate, and we should not forget that a fish marketing board is on the dock right beside the fisherman's boat. If you try to control marketing boards, you are in effect attacking the incomes of our primary producers, the farmers and fishermen.

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Farmers and fishermen in many parts of the country have fought for decades for a system of orderly marketing, for marketing boards in which they could have some input and membership. It has been the dream of farmers in my constituency and province, and they have fought and persuaded successive governments of differing political persuasions to implement them. If Mr. Pepin and Mrs. Plumptre think that the price of wheat is too high, and start messing around with the Canadian Wheat Board or the Hog Marketing Commission in Saskatchewan, we will have news for them. In the decades of fighting to get orderly marketing and marketing boards, farmers have been victimized by successive governments and have been treated unfairly through a cheap food policy. One of the contributing factors to the demise of 400,000 family farms since World War II is the cheap food policy.

When farmers were getting \$1 or \$1.50 per bushel for wheat two or three years ago, we all knew it was not meeting the cost of production, let alone providing a return on labour or investment. Now that the price of grain bears some relation to the cost of production for the first time, the chairman of the Anti-Inflation Board is screaming about marketing boards. If he comes to Saskatchewan, he had better keep his back to the wall and his guns loose in the holster, because a lot of farmers will want to talk to him very severely.

The Food Prices Review Board has not been able to find anything wrong at the packaging, wholesaling or retailing level, nor at the supermarkets of Garfield-Weston; therefore, they think there is something wrong with the marketing boards. But marketing boards are about the only protection the farmer has, and any fair-minded citizen is prepared to pay the price required to meet the cost of production and labour and something to live on.

The cost of production continues to increase. According to Statistics Canada, farm input rose by 9 per cent from the second quarter of 1974 to the second quarter of 1975, the latest figures available. Cost of production rose 29 per cent in the last two years. Just ask the cow-calf operator or the farmer who has a feed lot about his prices in light of that 29 per cent increase in the cost of production. There are many important components in the cost of production—mortgage credit, for instance. The credit required for land and buildings increased by 13 per cent from the second quarter of 1974 to the second quarter of 1975, and in the two-year period it increased by 32 per cent. The cost of farm machinery increased by 19 per cent in one year and 29 per cent over two years. Petroleum products increased 16 per cent in one year and 28 per cent in two years. Fertilizer shows a 39 per cent increase in one year and an 83 per cent increase in the two years. I submit that many of these increases were neither necessary nor justified, but the government is not interested in checking them.

In the face of those increases in the cost of farm production, Massey-Ferguson Limited recently reported record profits of \$53 million in the nine-month period ending July 31—an increase of 37 per cent over the same period in the previous year. That tells us something about the increase in the cost of farm implements and parts.

Let us look at banks. In the nine months until July 31, both the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce and the Toronto-Dominion Bank reported an increase of 23 per cent in profit over the previous year—\$92 million and \$65 million respectively. The Royal Bank of Canada did even better; their profit for the nine-month period was \$113 million, a 26 per cent increase over the same period in the previous year.

The cost of petroleum products has increased. Imperial Oil Limited is reaping a profit approaching \$1 million a day. If we are to do anything about prices, profits and incomes, if we are going to fight inflation, I submit we should start at the top. People at the top cause inflation, not those on low incomes. The old age pensioner is not the one to attack: start at the top and work down. High profits, unjustified price increases and high incomes should be attacked. That is where you start, whether it be with the president of a corporation, a trade union or a member of parliament: it is they who take more out of society than they put in.

Mr. Paproski: Speak for yourself.

Mr. Benjamin: For the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) to suggest that those on low incomes should quit trying to take more out of the economy than they are putting into it is the worst kind of insult to those people. I should like to see him work on the sewer and water system in the city of Regina, on a casual basis at the minimum wage. We would see whether he is putting more into the economy than he is taking out. That is an insult to the majority of people in this country. If this program entails attacking and undermining the marketing boards, I will campaign for its failure. I know thousands of others who will do the same and make no apologies for it.

Mr. Smith (Saint-Jean): A great Canadian.

Mr. Benjamin: The hon. member calls me a great Canadian and I accept that as a compliment. I am sure the hon. member for Saint-Jean (Mr. Smith) will do the same thing if he sees farmers being hurt by an attack on marketing boards through an income and prices program. I know he will join me if this program is not changed to provide more income for pensioners and people on low wages, and unorganized workers. If this program is unfair to them, together with thousands and thousands of other people I will do all I can to see that it fails. If it is implemented in such a manner as to be fair to those people, it will have my support and co-operation and that of the people of this country. From what we know of the program to date, it appears to be grossly unfair to most of the ordinary people in the country who are on low and fixed incomes and it cannot help but be harmful to primary producers. I submit the program is a failure.

As I said at the outset, we agree that we must do all we can to fight inflation or to reduce the rate of inflation. Every country in the world, even the totalitarian coun-