

Government Orders

We participated. We saved the farmland in the province of British Columbia, but not on the backs of the farmers. It was the community that accepted the responsibility for making sure that the program would work and that it was possible to make a living farming rather than developing and selling off farmland. Even if that would work, not everyone can sell his farm to a developer. It is just on the fringes.

The B.C. Federation of Agriculture, before I appeared on the scene, had said that if there was to be any program for helping farmers stay on the land, it should take no recognition at all of the development value of land. That is what land should be worth for development as opposed to what it should be used for farming. That should not be recognized at all.

May I say in determining the cost of production, it was negotiated step by step, but the one thing that we said would not be in it was the quotas. As a government, we were not prepared to participate in financing the purchase of quota. Everything else we recognized as a true cost of production, we included it all in the formula, we shared the premium and, of course, if there was a deficit, then the premium was raised enough to cover the deficit.

The farmers were encouraged by the calculations to get as much as they could out of the marketplace. I noticed that some members have talked about the importance and desirability of getting everything on to the marketplace. I agree totally. Some of the farmers have their own organizations, and some of them sell as individuals.

You were not reimbursed for the full cost of production. If there was a shortfall, then the formula generally was that the farmer would recover 75 per cent of the shortfall. The closer the producer was able to get to the calculated cost of production, the better. If he got more than that, he was so much better off.

The closest he was able to get up to it, the more revenue he ended up with. I notice one of the criticisms of this GRIP program is that the producers are not encouraged to get the maximum out of the marketplace.

Ours was designed very deliberately to do that. It was not always possible to do it, but certainly the pressure was on producers to maximize their return from the marketplace.

The program worked in the province of British Columbia. The leader of the demonstration against us when we first introduced the agricultural land legislation at the time was the president of the Fruit Growers Association. Shortly after that, it was the president of the B.C. Federation of Agriculture. He was the leader against us.

When we were in the election campaign, he asked if he could go on TV and tell the people of the province what what it thought about our programs in agriculture. We agreed because we need not use them if we did not want to use them. He was ready to go on an advertisement.

What he said was totally positive. He said it was the first time in the history of his total experience in agriculture and in politics in the province of British Columbia that any government had lived up to its promises to farmers.

Some concern has been raised as to whether or not this government will really live up to the promises. I like the principles. I like the way the minister presented it, and I am going to go on hoping until somebody convinces me otherwise that the minister does intend to deliver on this program.

Out of it will come a program that will make it possible for Canadian farmers to produce and make a living out of farming, rather than hoping that they are going to sell off.

Hon. Ralph Ferguson (Lambton—Middlesex): Mr. Speaker, I just want to ask our colleague from Nanaimo—Cowichan a question. He and I go back some 18 or 19 years ago when we developed some federal-provincial agreements that are still in place to this day, except for some special allowances that were made to Atlantic Canada because of the lack of opportunity there that we recognize from across the rest of Canada.

We made some concessions for them to assist them in their poultry operations, but all provinces other than those few were used alike.

• (1650)

I know that about two and a half years later we had to bring in a supplementary agreement to fine-tune the programs, but those programs and those agreements broke new ground and they are still in effect today.