

Agricultural Stabilization Act

57 per cent of hog production and 79 per cent of sheep production in Canada. It is indeed the best consensus reached for over 10 years.

The Canadian Association of Beef Producers, the Pork Marketing Boards in the four participating provinces and the Canadian Sheep Breeders Association have ratified and supported the program. In short, we have the necessary support to develop the best national tripartite stabilization program. Red meat producers will be the first to benefit from it. In fact, the most important aspect is that the program will in the first place be beneficial to Canadian producers. Who knows, other producers may follow their example.

● (1240)

[English]

I sincerely hope that with the goodwill of Parliament we will provide the opportunity for this program to become a reality in order to give Canadian farmers more stability at a time when it is genuinely needed and at a time when Canada needs a stable agricultural industry.

[Translation]

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to deal with Bill C-25. I wanted today to take this opportunity to ask the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) several questions, but things being as they are and without being more specific because it is not allowed, I will say only that I hope the Parliamentary Secretary will say hello to him on our behalf.

Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary indicated in his remarks that agriculture was a high priority of this Government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boudria: How sweet it is to hear such loud applause, Mr. Speaker!

Yet, I find it strange that this Government which has agriculture as a high priority and which introduced on January 24 this Bill to amend the Agricultural Stabilization Act needed as long as three and a half months to wake up and move its second reading. Thanks to the Government, the Opposition Members have had more than enough time to peruse this 9-page long Bill, but they did not really need quite as much time as that. Even a Conservative Member would not need three and a half months to read it. Yet, this Government claims it has agriculture as a high priority. I am grateful to the Parliamentary Secretary for saying that the Government regards Bill C-25 as a major piece of legislation. He has just stated that the House spent a long time dealing with Bill C-15, and that is the best excuse he could find for the Minister of Agriculture dragging his feet on this Bill which is so important to Canadian producers.

The Parliamentary Secretary will have to come up with a far better excuse to explain why he and his Minister dragged their feet on this, because both you and I know, Mr. Speaker, that we have been waiting impatiently for the Government to introduce legislation, so that the House may go on with its work.

[English]

This is the first piece of government legislation on which we have deliberated this week. Perhaps it is new Conservative policy to start working on Friday. We have spent all this week in the House, and the Government refused to bring forward legislation until today.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Boudria: I seem to have touched a tender nerve. It is nice to know that they will at least be awake for the weekend.

As I said previously, this Bill was introduced on January 24. It took the Government three months before deciding to deliberate on it at second reading, and three months is what the Government thinks is a reasonable amount of time to debate what the Parliamentary Secretary said earlier today was a priority of the Government. The Hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona (Mr. Kilgour) applauded the delaying and the dragging of their feet for three months on an agricultural Bill. Let the record show that this is what the Hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona is applauding, a three-month delay.

● (1250)

This Bill was promised by the Conservative Party during the election campaign, as it was by other political Parties. All Parties were in favour of tripartite stabilization. I remember it well. I heard it a lot during the campaign. I promised it myself. Things being the way they are, it is up to the Conservative Party to present government legislation. It has taken it this long to bring it forward.

This will assist the agricultural industry once it is passed. However, it is not the totality of what is needed. In listening to the speech made by the Parliamentary Secretary, one would almost think that the Conservative Party is actually the author of this legislation. It is guilty of its usual plagiarism. What Conservative Members are doing is introducing a Bill that had been presented by the previous Liberal Government. It was an omission or oversight by the Parliamentary Secretary that he neglected to bring that to the attention of the House. So that you will be aware, Mr. Speaker, I thought I would remind you of the fact that essentially the same Bill had been presented by the Liberal Government in the past.

There is considerable division in thought in the country as to just how the stabilization Bill or stabilization legislation would deal with agricultural problems. In many regions there are higher costs of production. Coming as I do from the Province of Quebec—I am sure the Hon. Member knows that—I know that some farmers feel that because of their higher cost of production, they should be able to get supplementary benefits or be able to top-load the program on provincial programs.