

Canada Co-operatives Association Bill

rate under this legislation. There are regional co-operatives, such as the Federated Co-operative, the Maritime Co-op Service and the United Maritime Fishermen, all of which likely will want to incorporate. All of these agencies likely will go into national organizations from the regional base they presently have. There will be the primary co-operative producers, such as Canadian Co-operative Implements Limited, which likely will want to come under this legislation since it is presently doing business in four provinces. I believe it also wishes to expand into two more Provinces as well as into some of the states south of the border. As a result of the royal commission on farm machinery, I think it is all the more important that Canadian Co-operative Implements Limited receive every facility of government, federal and provincial, to grow, expand and provide some real and meaningful competition and better products for the users of farm machinery.

My colleagues presently in this House and many of their predecessors for many years, Mr. Speaker, have raised this question. I know that hon. members in other places have done the same thing. I think it is fair to say there is no one in this House who will be opposed to this legislation or who will try to hinder it in any way. I believe this is a remarkable improvement over what occurred in our Parliament in previous years when attempts were made to obtain legislation designed to aid and develop the co-operative movement in Canada. I hope the minister will do his best to have this bill sent to a different committee than the one presently envisaged or make an effort to get rid of many of the lawyers on that committee and substitute members who have been participants in the co-operative movement. I realize that this will be up to the parties and House Leaders, but any assistance the minister can give will be greatly appreciated by many members. In conclusion, may I say that we welcome this legislation. We hope the House will deal with it quickly and efficiently and bring about some improvements to it.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, I should like to say just a few words at this stage to express to the minister and the government our satisfaction to see this bill introduced during the session.

Some hon. members who spoke before me said that this bill had been expected for more than half a century; doubtless the existing cooperative associations throughout Canada will welcome it. I hope that when this bill is considered by the Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs, the cooperative associations will want to give evidence before it and will be invited to do so.

Mr. Speaker, the cooperative movement in Canada has a long and admirable history, because since cooperatives have been in operation, they have at times given consumers as well as producers a new direction to their lives. Very often, people are exploited by profit mongers, and co-operative associations were introduced to curb their greed.

[Mr. Benjamin.]

I remember what I read several years ago about the beginning of a cooperative association for fishermen in the Gaspé area and in the Maritime provinces.

Thus, the credit union movement first had to educate people and give them new hopes. In spite of certain obstacles, it did succeed in improving the standard of living of the Gaspé and Maritimes fishermen.

In the field of consumption, for instance, numerous credit unions have managed to compete fairly with the great chain stores that had sometimes been exploiting the consumers.

Also, in the field of dairy products, people have been known to unite and achieve what they could never have done individually.

Naturally, abuses have been committed; however, they were no fault of the credit union movement itself, but rather that of the people who managed those particular credit unions.

Adoption of this bill and its referral to a standing committee of the House will be welcome not only by Parliament but also by all credit unions in Canada. The minister can rest assured of our co-operation in order that this bill be passed as soon as possible and become law before Christmas.

• (4:40 p.m.)

[English]

Mr. J. P. Nowlan (Annapolis Valley): I want to make a few brief remarks about Bill C-177, echoing the remarks made by the minister and by other members who welcomed the long awaited introduction of this bill. In effect, it will become a charter for the Canadian co-operatives that wish to carry on in the interprovincial markets. The Gods grind slowly, but I am somewhat surprised that it took the good government across the way quite as many years as it did to produce a bill to regulate the co-ops carrying on business across provincial boundaries. However, fortunately the day of reckoning has finally come; we have the bill before us and I hope and expect that it will receive a fairly speedy passage, certainly since it is being referred to a committee.

Whether this bill should go to the Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs where the minister customarily appears, or whether it should go to the Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs where the motion presently directs the bill is another matter. What is important is that it go to a committee where it can receive detailed examination. If it does, then I think the co-operative associations, which are a substantial industry in Canada, will welcome it.

As the hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin) said, the purpose of this bill is to complement provincial legislation, certainly not to replace that legislation. On that basis, I can support the motion and the principle of the bill. I hope the bill will expand the activities of the co-operative associations in Canada and