

Export and Import Permits

hon. members opposite that we did pinpoint a number of major weaknesses in the bill, among which was the absence of any mechanism for control of imports. You cannot conceivably exercise a program of supply management without some measure of import control on products coming into the country. The exercise we were engaged in was not a filibuster but an attempt to improve this obviously bad piece of legislation, and I suggest it was bad in that it took over two and a half years for that bill to pass through all stages of this House. I suggest the bill took that long during those stages because of the dedication and determination of a number of members who considered its impact and proposed amendments to make it workable. Because of their intransigent position, the government failed to recognize some of the inherent shortcomings we pointed out when attempting to make that bill workable.

I think the piece of legislation before us now, particularly the provisions in clause 2, represent a classic example of this government's backtracking. One of the major products covered under the farm products marketing bill was eggs and other poultry products. Today we find egg producers in a very serious state of affairs because of the tremendous importation of eggs from the United States. It is the egg producers who are asking parliament to expedite the passage of this bill, as they are faced with the prospect of a depression in prices due to the huge number of eggs coming in from across the border. Many of the egg producers in Canada are being literally driven up against the wall because of high input costs.

Naturally I support this legislation, as I know hon. members in our party will support it, but I want to remind hon. members on that side of the House that they alone do not have all the answers in respect to good legislation in this country. They and they alone do not have a monopoly on good ideas. Had they considered and accepted our amendment in the first place they might have been saved a great deal of embarrassment. I think the type of backtracking evident in this bill is a classic example of this government using its arrogance and intransigent attitude to hide its ignorance.

Mr. John Harney (Scarborough West): Mr. Speaker, I am afraid I could not possibly turn a phrase like the one turned by the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) who just sat down, but I should like to make a few remarks about the bill before us. I might say at the very beginning that the specific bill before us skirts very closely to that part of the Export and Import Permits Act which could lead to a fair amount of controversy.

The bill we are now studying, specifically that part in respect of Section 3(a), which comes very close to sub-section (b), allows the governor in council to produce a list of goods which may not be re-exported from Canada; that is to say, goods which are imported into Canada to be re-exported to other countries. This is the rather infamous part of the act which allows the governor in council to prevent the exportation of goods produced in one country to another country, using Canada as a vehicle.

However, part of the bill before us does deal with a very important matter. It is a very short part but very important, and its importance is not so much in the amount of power it provides the government as an indication that

[Mr. Mazankowski.]

there are the beginnings of a change in our thinking in this country about exports and their relation to our total production and the wellbeing of the people of Canada.

Most of us have been brought up in a certain cultural ambience. In this cultural ambience we have certain articles of faith that have been passed down to us without this ever having been questioned. One of these articles of faith held dearly and without question by most Canadians is that to export is a good thing, and that the more we export the better off we all are. I submit that this is an article of faith which is so firmly lodged in the Canadian consciousness that it is something we have inherited from the days of the Montreal fur merchant.

● (2140)

Of course, to them export was a good thing, because to export massively meant more money and profits for them. They can also justify the exportation of that commodity, and later on persons can justify the exportation of other commodities because such exportation satisfies a very real and physical need of the mother country. But we are now a country on our own and we have to begin to bring into question this ancient tendency of our economic fate, which is simply that we must export not only to survive but to thrive.

In a small, very hesitant way this bill begins to question that tenet. We did some questioning earlier this year when we slapped an export tax on petroleum. For the first time in the history of this country we told ourselves it was not our duty to export everything our land could produce. We began to tell ourselves that perhaps it was our duty to satisfy Canadian needs first. To very many people in this House or in this country, that was a milestone in our history. It was the first time this ever really happened.

Beyond this milestone, probably just part of a kilometer further on, we have this bill which brings into doubt some of the beliefs we have had for a long time. The bill, in effect, says that we shall empower the Governor in Council to state that it will not be to the benefit and to the wellbeing of this country to export certain goods unless they are processed, fabricated or manufactured to a further state. Here we have evidence that we are beginning to stop thinking of ourselves as merely hewers of wood and drawers of water.

While going through the Toronto terminal II yesterday, which is something I must do in order to get to Ottawa, I went through one of the security mechanisms which the Department of Transport have installed to check everybody, including members of parliament. I noticed one of these mechanisms was a particularly handsome one and I stopped to look at it. It was made of wood, a commodity we produce in quantity in this country. But although it was made of wood, it was not made of wood from this country. It was made in Finland in a place called Kuopio, a marvellous community which I had the opportunity to visit last year.

This reminded me of a principle of economics, production and exports which the Finnish people have had now for some time. It is very simply this: no resource that is developed and produced in Finland is exported out of the country unless it is manufactured, processed or fabricated to the nth degree. This is not the first time, of course, that