

The farmers in my constituency do not want something for nothing. They want the chance to earn a fair return for their work. That is why the system of parity pricing is something that they find exciting. It gives them a sense of optimism about the future.

The Bill in front of us introduced by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom), sets forth the concept. It does it in the context of western Canadian agriculture, quite frankly. People in my constituency have said that there are commodities which need to be dealt with, such as soybeans and corn which are covered by this Bill. That is a case for getting this Bill to committee and getting the committee to travel across the country to hear representations from farmers in eastern Canada as well as in western Canada. We can give those farmers a chance to grapple with this question themselves, the question of how to get the fair pricing or parity pricing that will give those farmers a future.

● (1740)

I support the concerned farmers of Essex County as strongly as I possibly can and I will continue to do so. I stress the point I made to them in a speech I gave a few weeks ago, and that is that this is not a partisan issue, it is an issue of justice for our farming community. This Bill will take us one step further in the right direction and I hope we can take that step here today.

Mr. Stan Schellenberger (Wetaskiwin): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure for me to intercede in a debate on agriculture. I do not believe there is anyone in the House who does not recognize the importance to a country of a strong basis in agriculture. I do not believe there is anyone in the House who does not recognize that in many areas of our agricultural industries today there are serious problems. That is why when Members put their minds to looking for ways to assist agriculture, no one should rise in the House and say that those ideas should not be explored.

On that basis, I commend the Hon. Member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom) for bringing forward a Bill that gives us an idea as to how we can address the difficulties that face farmers in our country today. I do not happen to agree with everything that is in the piece of legislation brought forward by the Hon. Member, but I am sure Hon. Members of the House will not happen to agree with all of the ideas I may put forward as to how we ought to progress in order to assist agriculture.

The point that ought to be made is that we as private Members—and we are dealing with Private Members' Hour—have the right and the duty to put ideas forward to Parliament for consideration. If those ideas are right and we can convince the Cabinet that they are right, then the Cabinet ought to put them into law so they can assist the farmers. But how can we do that?

The best method that is available to us as private Members is the committee system. Committees have the ability to seek the best advice in the country on a subject matter and committees are not limited to getting ideas from within 10 miles of

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Ottawa. All too often we forget that all the ideas for solving a problem are not to be found within this institution and its hallowed halls or glass towers. We must seek the advice of the people who elect us. In this case, we must seek the advice of the farmers of the nation and of those who work with the farmers' produce. We must work with them to see whether or not the ideas put forward in this legislation are the right ones. If they are not the right ideas, we must have compromises and other ideas put forward for the committee to review and put before the House.

In my opinion, the Government has been helpful to the agricultural industry from the time of its election to this point. Agriculture has been given a great deal of attention by this House. When the cost of production is higher than the price received for that produce, cutting the cost of production is a simple idea and one the Government can move quickly to address. We have seen such things as the fuel price subsidy and the quick movement on the Western Grain Stabilization Act which gave farmers an interim payment. I phoned my brother today to see whether or not we got our interim payment. We did, and it is a welcome surprise. Those kinds of things will assist farmers and will assist them quickly.

As mentioned by my colleagues in the House, there are other problems to be faced. There are international problems of tariffs and duties that are put on products when we get involved in internal subsidies in an attempt to solve problems. There is also a difficulty in accessing markets for our produce.

Something that has always concerned me is that there are so many people in this world who need the food we produce in this country but do not have the money to buy it. As a result, we are in competition with two or three other nations which have the same capacity to produce food but have access to the same few countries in the world that can afford to buy our products. Therefore we find such things as those in which the European Community is now involved, such as high subsidies for exports for products and production, or those in which the Americans are involved, such as extensive credit to gain access to markets for their products. They are all in competition with us and we here in Canada with our small Treasury must use our goodwill or the tremendous capacity of our farmers to become more and more efficient and to be price competitive in order to gain access to world markets.

I would now like to deal with the Bill that is before us. As was mentioned by a number of Members, parity is not a new idea. I can remember when the price of oil started to rise. A suggestion was made to me that it had always seemed to be that the price of a bushel of wheat was equal to the price of a barrel of oil. There was a feeling that we should raise the price of a bushel of wheat to the same price that was being paid for a barrel of oil. Of course, that got to be ridiculous as oil prices rose to \$36 a barrel. However, the feeling existed that the two commodities should be worth the same.

We are trying to determine in our own mind what a bushel of wheat, a steer or a hog should be worth. When a commission is put in place to make that determination, problems arise immediately. There are difficulties with those farmers who are