

speech. This was full consultation. These people came to tell us what kind of legislation would be the best according to them. And we saw a number of regional interests. Everybody always looks after his own, and we saw, for instance, that producers from British Columbia took one position and producers from the Maritimes a different one and Western producers another position again, and of course there were some differences. Following these discussions, the Minister of Agriculture, after all witnesses had been heard, tabled a major amendment that responded more or less to what the producers, the pork producers were asking, half—

An Hon. Member: More or less.

Mr. Gérin:—half of the basic demands of the UPA, half of the basic demands of the Fédération des producteurs de porc du Québec which correspond with the demands of the Canadian Pork Council. I have it all here:

The CPC members from the other provinces, British Columbia, Quebec and the Atlantic provinces, support the position that the Bill be amended to delete the requirement that provincial plans be dropped as a precondition for the respective provinces to participate in a national agreement and that the terms for this provincial participation—

—that is, both producers and provincial governments—

—be elements to be negotiated in the development of any national agreement.

That is exactly what the Minister's amendment added. So it cannot be said that we are not meeting one of the two conditions.

The other condition refers to production costs. It says here:

The basic position of the members of the Canadian Pork Council is that there are in fact major differences in the costs of production in the respective provinces and that a single, national support level, based on a national average of prices and costs, so far as the latter are and would be used in determining the support level, fails to recognize their cost and price situations.

● (1840)

In addition, any payment based on national average costs and prices would be an advantage for regional producers whose costs are lower. According to the members, the fact is that agriculture in Canada is a joint federal-provincial responsibility and provincial Governments now have a wide range of policies and programs whose consequences vary appreciably, so the federal legislation under which producers might be eligible for participation ought not to exclude the producers in certain provinces for the only reason that a provincial support program already exists.

They maintain that this enabling legislation must not be a way to redress injustices stemming from provincial agricultural programs or policies. So here is the amendment introduced by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise). And the statement goes on to say:

"Canadian Pork Council members think that Bill C-25 should be amended to delete the requirement that provincial programs be abandoned prior to participation in a national

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agreement, yet keeping in mind that equity and balance in the way producers are treated under the various provincial stabilization programs would still be the subject of serious negotiations in the preparation of agreements."

Therefore I fail to see how the Hon. Member for Richmond-Wolfe (Mr. Tardif) can say that this Bill—and that is a reproach he voiced—evades the issue by avoiding confrontation. Of course not! It is a general legislation seeking to achieve consensus. Will we have consensus? I do not know. Nobody here can predict that.

No, Sir, we should not necessarily refrain from drafting a piece of legislation simply because we are not yet sure the producers will go along with it. But we do have a general legislation as it is and it makes it possible for pork producers of all regions of Canada to regroup, consider what might be the best formulas, and recommend to the Canadian Minister of Agriculture and to the provincial Governments a stabilization plan which they could live with.

This is how I understand that piece of legislation and how I see that it does give pork producers a fighting chance to improve their industry.

The leaders of Quebec pork producers had an opportunity to appear before us, as reported in issue 25 of the Votes and Proceedings of the Standing Committee on Agriculture.

If I may, I would like to quote a few comments made by the president of the UPA, Mr. Jacques Proulx.

As concerns the first point, namely the fact that he objected to the Bill because it deals with price stabilization and not income stabilization, he said: "—even though Bill C-25 appears to create openings for income stabilization programs based on production costs—". He therefore admitted that this Bill is an improvement and aims at providing stabilization based on production costs.

You can read the whole text if you like!

On page 25:8, he said the following: "In our view, this desire on the part of the federal government to penalize provinces that have their own stabilization scheme is illogical in terms of its content and unacceptable in terms of its underlying principles." However, at that time, the amendment which Quebec producers have found entirely satisfactory had not been proposed.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Proulx then added: "We agree that, at the national level, there should exist a tripartite stabilization program of the most beneficial and flexible type possible. We also believe that there should continue to be complimentary income stabilization schemes based on the priorities and objectives of each province. There should also be co-ordination between the two levels of government, and the governments should conduct such co-ordination through ongoing consultations aimed at adjusting their policies."