

So do not expect me to have faith in this government's Minister of Agriculture. I am simply not up to it because of the action taken by this government and its Minister of Agriculture in this session.

I do not have the power to force a vote and ask that this bill be sent back to the House of Commons this evening, but I will certainly voice my opposition for the reasons I have just mentioned because I think that the agricultural community is being served very badly, particularly in light of the additional taxes it will have to pay on gasoline.

That is what I had to say and I rushed here from my home to do so. I did not intend to come here this evening because I had urgent family duties. I managed to get away, which explains why I may appear to be slightly out of breath.

I had to say it and I want the farmers to know that I said it and that I am not pleased about this legislation. I can assure you, honourable senators, that the farmers are not pleased either because the government has just created another jungle, another bureaucratic and administrative maze, with all that power given to the minister. He will be free to impose his political will come rain or come shine, as he or his party supporters see fit. That is not the way to serve the agricultural community of this country.

In the past I have seen too many examples of prerogatives based on partisan politics to endorse this kind of legislation.

I will sit down in a few seconds but not before repeating that it is bad legislation, incomplete legislation. We will probably have to wait till kingdom come before we have another opportunity to put some order in the Agricultural Stabilization Act, and that I find very regrettable. I am not the one who is going to have to live with it, but the current administration and the Minister of Agriculture will. I hope he will remember that when eastern Canada producers come to ask him to get them out of their misery, out of a difficult situation on domestic and international markets, out of their despair.

That is what I had to say, honourable senators, and I thank you for your kind attention.

[English]

● (2140)

Senator Phillips: Honourable senators—

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Honourable senators, I must inform honourable senators that if the Honourable Senator Phillips speaks now, his speech will have the effect of closing the debate on the motion for second reading of this bill.

Senator Phillips: Honourable senators, I shall reply briefly to the points raised by the two previous speakers. I was particularly intrigued to find Senator Argue raising the question of hog production in Prince Edward Island. It is true that a new plant is being built in Prince Edward Island to replace one that is being phased out by Canada Packers. But I would point out that at this time last year a Liberal government, of which the honourable senator was a member, was boasting that it was contributing \$2.5 million to the construction of this very plant that the honourable senator is now criticizing.

[Senator Corbin.]

Senator Argue: You had two policies, that's all.

Senator Phillips: I am sure the honourable senator was aware of that commitment to the plant, but he probably forgot.

Senator Guay: The opposition was against it.

Senator Phillips: No. The only objection of the opposition, to be honest, Senator Guay, was that it was not enough. I admit to Senator Argue that there is room for questioning the amendment on top loading. I, too, questioned it, but I did so probably from a different perspective. He questioned whether it would allow the top-loading to continue. I questioned whether it would allow the provinces to negotiate with the federal government on the top-loading. So probably time will answer that question for most of us.

Senator Corbin raised the question of potatoes being covered under the legislation. I would remind him that I, too, have an interest in potato production. We in Prince Edward Island can compete with his province in that regard any time.

In the past potatoes have been covered a number of times under the Agricultural Stabilization Act, with the federal government providing all of the funding. That can continue. I was informed by the officials from the Stabilization Board that potatoes could be covered under a tripartite agreement.

However, I would also point out to the honourable senator that there is one difficulty, namely, that the stabilization program does not apply to exports, and much of the production in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island are seed potatoes that are exported; and we have to be careful that we do not get into further problems in our American market if we attempt to provide stabilization payments in Canada.

I hope that answers the points raised by the two honourable senators, and again I commend the bill for speedy passage.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Is it your pleasure, honourable senators, to adopt the motion?

Senator Corbin: On division.

Motion agreed to and bill read second time, on division.

THIRD READING

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Honourable senators, when shall this bill be read the third time?

Senator Phillips: With leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 45(1)(b), I move that the bill be read the third time now.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Is leave granted, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Honourable senators, is it your pleasure to adopt the motion?

Senator Corbin: On division.

Motion agreed to and bill read third time and passed, on division.