

clear that it will not be imposed on anyone. If the farmers vote against it, fine, that is their decision. Those provisions are included in the Bill which is before the House today.

● (1700)

If the farmers, indeed, vote for a parity price for beef, pork, or grains, as is mentioned at the beginning of the Bill, then once again there will be an advisory board. That advisory board will be elected by the producers. It will not be appointed by the Government. That is similar to the way in which the Wheat Board advisory committee is elected across the Prairies. I think that outlines in a very brief way the kind of idea which we have in mind with respect to the parity price Bill, Bill C-232.

I would like to conclude by thanking literally dozens and dozens of farmers who have lobbied on this Bill. A committee of farmers came from the Prairies to visit Ottawa about three weeks ago, during the seeding season. Those farmers came here to speak with Members not only on the Government side, but as well with Members of the two opposition Parties. They spoke to most of the members of the Agriculture Committee, including the Chairman. They stressed to everyone they saw the importance of establishing parity pricing as a principle in this country. I found it interesting that in Regina, on Tuesday of this week, seven farm organizations met to talk about the parity Bill. Six of those seven farm organizations agreed publicly at a press conference that they would endorse the Bill in principle. Of course, they also indicated that there were some details in the Bill on which they could not agree. That is normal and that is natural. That is why it is important to ensure that a Bill such as this be referred to committee so that it can be studied in detail.

The interesting thing about those farm organizations is that they are very diverse. They include the National Farmers Union, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, the Palliser Wheat Growers Association, the Canadian agricultural movement, a cattlemen's group which is called the Cow-Calf Association, as well as the Canola Council of Canada. Those six groups endorsed in principle, via a news conference in Regina, the idea of parity pricing. I grew up on a farm, and I know that it is very rare for all of these farm groups to get together to endorse anything in principle. I think it shows us in this House—and I think it is a non-partisan matter—that the farmers on the Prairies are rallying around an idea which is important. What they are saying to us in principle is that they want a committee to study this matter, they want public hearings and they want the House to act quickly. If we do not act quickly, more and more farmers will go bankrupt. Therefore, I make the appeal to my hon. friends in all three Parties that the subject matter of this Bill be sent to committee.

In the last few days I have been involved in conversations with various Members of the House in attempting to reach an agreement to pass a motion which would refer this subject matter to committee. I gather that this is the correct procedure and perhaps, later on in the proceedings this afternoon, a Member of this House could move a motion to that effect.

Parity Prices

I would like to thank the Members of this House for the co-operation which I have received from my colleagues, from members of the Liberal Party and from members of the Conservative Party. I hope that this matter will be referred to committee and I hope that it will be possible for the Standing Committee on Agriculture to hold public hearings as soon as this summer. I hope there will be some action to establish parity prices for farm products. As I have already indicated, I am not wed to every idea, every "i" that is dotted and "t" that is crossed in the Bill. We are putting it forward for discussion and we hope that the House will agree to have the Standing Committee on Agriculture consider it.

I would like to single out one farmer from the Yorkton area whose name is Jim Coueslan. He is the person who was selected by the six farm organizations in Regina on Tuesday to act as their spokesperson on parity pricing. He is a former farm broadcaster from Yorkton at radio station CJGX and is a farmer in the Saltcoats area of my riding. I wanted to thank him publicly. I dare not mention other names because, if I did, I would be missing too many. I think that what these farmers have done is something which is very exciting. They united and rallied around an idea, stirred up public support for that idea and popularized it. I am very proud, as a Member of Parliament from Yorkton-Melville, to play a small part in attempting to get this matter studied seriously by the Parliament of Canada for the first time. I hope it will have the co-operation of the House.

Mr. Peter Elzinga (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, at the outset I would like to indicate to the Hon. Member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom) that he has the concurrence of this Party in seeing that this matter is referred to the Standing Committee on Agriculture.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Elzinga: In saying that, I would like to share a few concerns which relate to the agricultural sector as a whole. I respect the sincerity of the Member who introduced the Bill. However, the NDP is involved in spouting platitudes while we are involved with specifics and are interested in turning around the economic hardships which those in the agricultural sector face. In looking at the legislation, it is obvious that individuals throughout the country are being misled as to what this specific legislation would do.

Last Saturday evening, I had the opportunity to speak with a farm survival group in my riding. They mentioned this legislation and they also indicated that it would establish parity for all agricultural products. Nothing could be further from the truth. This Bill simply establishes parity prices for wheat, oats and barley which is used for human consumption in Canada. That is a very small portion of the grain which is produced in Canada. Quite frankly, the Bill does not go far enough.

Mr. Nystrom: It is a good step, though.