

Agricultural Stabilization Act

quite interesting to me, in which it is stated, Mr. Speaker, that—

—this is only a pretext, because the Provinces have found over the years a number of loopholes.

In cases where indeed there is no direct subsidy, they find a way to subsidize farmers in respect of fences, ditches, a number of items which as such, are perhaps not direct subsidies to any specific industry but which considered indirectly are a subsidy, to the point where the implementation of Bill C-25 would change absolutely nothing, would simply result in somehow institutionalizing a number of loopholes with the result that the unity or consistency aimed at by the Minister would in no way be reached.

Under the circumstances, Mr. Speaker, to me this legislation seems quite simply a piece of utter discrimination against all Quebec commodities and producers. Remember, Mr. Speaker, how this Government supported those great principles of consultation, openness, forthright and honest discussion with all parties involved! Do you remember all that talk about how this Government would definitely be a model of communication and consultation with provincial Governments? It is rather amazing that on this issue that is so basic to Quebec farming, all producers, all farmers, the Minister of Agriculture, all organizations, all unions unanimously and strongly opposed, and have been pressuring the Government for a long time to postpone or to further consider the consequences seen to be absolutely harmful to Quebec farming.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Agriculture to recognize that basic reality in Canadian farming, that the Quebec Government, the Province of Quebec and all Quebec farmers ferociously oppose the Bill. We urge the Minister and all Hon. Members opposite who made the same points, who met the same producers, who are aware of the same problems, to please beg the Minister and ask for a fair and just bill that will protect what Quebec farmers have gained over the last few years.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions, comments.

The Hon. Member for Mégantic-Compton-Stanstead (Mr. Gérin).

● (1830)

Mr. François Gérin (Mégantic-Compton-Stanstead): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was anxious not to miss this last opportunity to speak to the Bill before the House, a Bill that is so important to agriculture both in Canada and Quebec. After listening to two Liberal Members from Quebec on this Bill, I must say that I did not altogether like what they said about the Quebec caucus, Mr. Speaker. But I suppose it is because they do not have a Quebec caucus, in fact never had one because it was not much use in the past.

I think it would be appropriate to recall what has transpired in connection with this Bill, and so correct a number of

statements made by the two previous speakers, the Hon. Member for Shefford (Mr. Lapierre) and the Hon. Member for Richmond-Wolfe (Mr. Tardif). First of all, I think there was full and adequate consultation. I am sure we could have gone on consulting for two years, but I also think that everyone who wanted to be heard on this Bill had that opportunity.

I may recall, first of all, that there were 12 days of hearings before the committee, from May 28 to June 21. There was always at least one Quebecer present on each of those days. There was always one Member of the Quebec caucus of the Conservative Party at each of those hearings. Thirty-four associations were heard. A number of briefs drafted by people who did not come in person were submitted, but nevertheless, 34 associations took the trouble to come here, be heard, make suggestions and comments, and give constructive criticism, not like what we have just heard from Liberal Party Members who only want to be negative and kill this Bill.

In fact, we heard a lot of constructive criticism. Four provincial Ministers of Agriculture came to Ottawa to testify before the Committee. There were two representatives from other provinces, representing provincial Departments of Agriculture, and of course we had officials from Agriculture Canada as well as the Minister of Agriculture who came several times to answer questions put to him by the committee.

From Quebec alone and I am going to name only a few because Quebec belongs to practically all Canadian agricultural associations, such as the Canadian Pork Council, the Canada Sheep Council, the Retail Council of Canada, the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, the National Farmers' Union, and I could name most of the 34 associations I referred to earlier there were six which are particularly important to Quebec producers and these were the Union des producteurs agricoles du Québec, whose President, Jacques Proulx, appeared before the committee, and I will talk about Mr. Proulx a little later. We had the Fédération des producteurs de porc du Québec, represented by their president, Yvon Scalabrini, who lives in the great riding of Mégantic-Compton-Stanstead, about five miles from my home, and for whom I have great respect—he is a remarkable man. We had the Fédération des producteurs de bovins du Québec, with their President, Mr. Gilles Saint-Laurent who came to testify before the committee. We had the Fédération des producteurs d'agneau et de mouton du Québec, which testified through Mr. Gauthier. We had the Office des producteurs de porc du Québec, the Conseil de la production intégrée du porc and the Fonds de recherche porc sain.

Mr. Speaker, how could anyone say this Bill is being adopted without consultation? This is consultation beyond one's wildest dreams!

Mr. Lapierre: Window dressing!

Mr. Gérin: It was not window dressing, to quote the Hon. Member for Shefford (Mr. Lapierre), who is interrupting my