

*Food Prices Committee*

tainly, consumers' organizations should appear before the committee. What I am trying to say is that all groups should be represented. We should not merely load the gun in committee and then come back into this House with a report that is not viable.

The committee will be made up of members from all sides of this House. Because of our present make-up and the party system in this House, every member who serves on the committee should be sincere and dedicated. Hon. members should be interested in bringing a fair report to this House which will be in the interests of the consumer, the producer and all others involved in the food industry.

In my opening remarks I referred to the fact that farmers must pay for shipping their animals or food products to markets where they are processed and then returned. I think it important that we have regional slaughter-houses instead of shipping hogs, sheep and cattle to large centres where the industry is tied up in a few very large conglomerates. I think the committee should make an in-depth study of this aspect of the problem.

Another way to protect the farmer is to examine what has happened during the past 12 months. In eastern Ontario, stretching through to North Bay, there was a very serious wet weather problem and many farmers lost their year's crop. They are faced with additional expenditures this winter in order to bring their herds through the winter months.

**Mr. Baker:** The government did not do very much to help them.

**Mr. Hopkins:** The government gave them assistance. This was done here in Ottawa on the initiative of a number of members of the Liberal caucus on that day.

**Mr. Baker:** Why weren't they returned?

**Mr. Clermont:** I was one of them.

● (1530)

**Mr. Hopkins:** I am here today. I have travelled from farm to farm with delegates visiting these farmers, not only in my riding but elsewhere. We did receive some input and I would be willing to supply the hon. member with letters I received from satisfied farmers in the area. Those letters are one indication why I am back, contrary to what the hon. member across the way said a moment ago.

The chairman of this special committee must be a good diplomat, a fair-minded person who will have to know all the rules and operations of a committee. I think it will behave every member of the committee to try to give him respect in return for his or her fair play, just as it behooves us to give the same respect to the Chair in this House under similar circumstances.

The study of food prices in Canada will undoubtedly greatly be affected by what is happening in many Asian countries today. Right from the time western Canada started producing No. 1 wheat we have heard it said that Canada is the breadbasket of the world. Some nations of the world will obviously face great difficulty in the immediate years ahead. Surely there should be some international agency more effective than any to date

[Mr. Hopkins.]

which will provide, on a multinational level, funds for the production of food to help these needy nations over their difficult times. We cannot expect the farmers of Canada to produce food that is to be given away, with no return to them on their cost of transportation and operation within Canada as a whole.

As a nation highly respected in the eyes of the world, we have a responsibility to help nations that are in difficulty and this we have done over the years. In comparison with other nations of the world, I think Canada, by and large, has a pretty good record of being our brother's keeper. If we are to be sincere in our international relations and if other nations want to be sincere with us, we must find ways and means at the international level of getting food to areas in need, at least if we have any Christian, Hebrew or other ethics left in this country. And they are here, despite all the pessimistic views expressed about churches today.

In closing, I congratulate the government for bringing forward this motion. At the same time, I emphasize how important it is that the committee operates efficiently. Secondly, all elements of the food industry should be able to make representations to the committee. Thirdly, the cost of distributing food throughout Canada must be examined carefully. Lastly, we must bring back a report to the House that is not only logical and credible in the eyes of the House but also in the eyes of the Canadian people at large. Having brought back that report to the House, I know that the government will be prepared to consider it in all seriousness, as I am sure will all members of the House. Let us keep our eye on the basic interests of John Q. Public, not on John Jones, MP and on what we might gain in a cheap manner through political action.

I have many friends on both sides of this House, Mr. Speaker. When the mover and seconder of the address in reply to the throne speech spoke the other day, they reminded me of some words that I used in my maiden speech in this House—that if we can lay aside personalities, say the things to one another that we have to say and then walk out of the House as friends prepared to come back the next day and work constructively for the nation, then we can make this parliament work. We will be able to produce a good report on food costs, and if we give it a fair chance we will have probably one of the most effective committees in this twenty-ninth parliament.

**Mr. Don Blenkarn (Peel South):** Mr. Speaker, it is with a great deal of humility that I come to this House. The county of Peel and the riding of Peel South are once again represented properly by members on this side of the House in this party. The county of Peel is again happy and proud to be represented by a party that has been charged with greatness in the past. I have not had the chance to speak before in this House, so may I first of all congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Deputy Speaker, as well as the hon. member for Stormont-Dundas (Mr. Lamoureux) on his election as Speaker of the House.

A lot has been said in this debate, and I agree with the hon. member for Ottawa West (Mr. Reilly) that perhaps we are spending too much time talking rather than getting down to business. I should like to use some of my time to