

as much as he possibly can. I want to recognize that and thank him for attending in the way that he has.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stupich: As I started to say, when I first spoke in the legislature in B.C. 27 years ago concerning agriculture, one of the Socred cabinet ministers interjected and said that the NDP must have fallen to a pretty low level when they were calling on a chartered accountant to lead off the agriculture debate. The leader of the opposition at that time, Bob Strachan, replied to the effect that I was the only member in the House with a degree in agriculture. I had been raised on a small farm and had operated my own poultry farm for several years, so I had something more going for me than a degree in agriculture when I spoke.

Since then, I have added to that experience by having been minister of agriculture the whole time the New Democrats were in office in British Columbia. It is about that experience that I would like to talk briefly.

First, may I say that with respect to this legislation, the long title of the bill tells it the way I like to see it. The long name of the Farm Income Protection Act best spells out the government's intent. It is:

An Act authorizing agreements between the Government of Canada and the provinces to provide for protection for the income of producers of agricultural products and to enable the Government of Canada to take additional measures for that purpose.

I wish this kind of enabling legislation had been in effect when I was minister of agriculture in the province of British Columbia.

The legislation talks about the goals, the guiding principles of the legislation itself. There is a comment about that from some representatives of the departments of agriculture and economics in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, to the effect that GRIP, while the legislation says that it should be market responsive, is not market responsive. The legislation says that GRIP should encourage self-reliance, and the economists say that it does not encourage self-reliance as the pay-out from the program is more important than the level of output, when talking about grain. The legislation says that it should recognize regional diversity; the professors say that it does not so recognize. The legislation says that it should be environmentally sound, and they say that it is not.

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I will leave all that to the discussions in committee. I am sure there will be representatives there from the Minister of Agriculture to deal with those comments.

There is a quotation that I used in the second report of the B.C. Agricultural Land Commission that tells it the way I see it, and I think it is worth repeating at this time. It comes from a book by William Jennings Bryan, entitled *Cross of Gold*. It reads:

Burn down your cities and leave our farms, and your cities will spring up again as if by magic; but destroy our farms and the grass will grow in the streets of every city in the country.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to maintain the rural areas, but you cannot maintain the areas unless you have people there and you cannot have people there unless it is economically sensible for them to be there. We have a responsibility as a society to make sure that farmers can make a living farming.

It used to be that in the province of British Columbia, and I suppose in every other province, farmers looked forward to making their living or at least their retirement income by selling their farmland for a great price. One of the first things that I was able to do as Minister of Agriculture in B.C. was to bring in legislation freezing the development of agricultural land. We wanted to make sure that that land would be there for the future when it might be needed to produce food, where people could see farmers in action, farmers producing, where youngsters could go from school and see that milk does not come from cans or out of a bag of powdered milk but that food is produced by people working the land. I felt it was important to do that and important to maintain the rural areas.

Another of my experiences was five years in the air force during the war. During two years of that I was teaching at a school for flying instructors. In my experience, those students who came from farming areas anywhere in the British Commonwealth—this was the Commonwealth Air Training Plan—the ones who came from farms as opposed to those who came from cities, had learned to be reliable working on their farms. They had learned to be self-reliant, since you cannot stop your farm operation because something breaks down. You have to haywire it together somehow and keep it working. They turned out to be the best air crew personnel, certainly the best pilots. That was the experience of all those working in the Commonwealth Air Training plan.