

Food Policy

An hon. Member: Don't forget Otto.

Mr. Whelan: If they were given the proper incentive for nearly any of those things that our climatic conditions will allow us to grow, productivity could be increased by 50 per cent in five years. But we must make sure they get a proper return. That is what we point out in the strategy paper. It is wasteful and uneconomic to let the producer think that the food will be thrown on the world market in distress form. This is what happened with skim milk powder. The OPEC countries, Japan and everybody else got tremendous bargains, but it cost our producers money because of the biological entity we were dealing with called the cow.

● (1430)

You learn from experience. You can store grain for years so long as you store it in good condition and keep it dry. But you cannot store all commodities. It sounds grand and charitable to say "Store the food you produce." But, Mr. Speaker, some of it you cannot store, some of it you cannot sell, and some you can't even give away. I say, be realistic instead of making such wild, far-out suggestions.

Mr. Elzinga: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture requested a question on supply-management. Is the Minister of Agriculture's concept of supply-management the same as that just enunciated by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs?

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, we do not differ very much on that, but I am sure even identical twins differ somewhat. We have been called identical twins, but there is nothing identical about us. Just look! When I was talking to the Toronto board of trade about all the things I am trying to do, someone sent me a note saying, "Keep talking, you sound like a Tory." Needless to say, I sat down.

Mr. Elzinga: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. It was nice to hear the minister confirm, for a change, that he agrees with the concept the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs just explained, for that minister told the House he believed that we should have government-operated boards for supply-management, instead of producer-operated boards. Apparently the minister agrees with this, and I am glad he put it on record. If he disagrees, I suggest that it is time for the minister to listen more and not talk so much.

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, I suggest the same to the hon. member. I said we differ. I said that basically I agree with his principles concerning supply-management. But you cannot have a rigid society totally based on supply-management. However, the hon. member knows exactly, because he asked me in committee if I supported the concept of producer-run marketing boards. I certainly do. I do not believe in bureaucrats running them. They do not run any for which I am responsible.

Mr. Abbott: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I did not state that I do not believe in producer-operated boards. I

said I do not favour a wide expansion of supply-management whereby bureaucrats essentially would set the estimates of demand levels. That is the only reference I made on the point, and I want to correct any possible misapprehension.

Mr. Elzinga: Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. I say to the minister—and the record will show, I suggest—that he said "government operated boards."

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Hon. members ought to be aware that this is a time set aside for questions and answers, not for statements to be made from both sides of the House. If the hon. member wishes to ask a supplementary question, I will recognize him. If nobody wishes to ask questions, we shall proceed to orders of the day.

Mr. Elzinga: Mr. Speaker, may I direct one further question to the Minister of Agriculture? What does the minister think of Bill C-42, and how does he think it will affect the food policy he just enunciated in the House?

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, I do not think we should discuss Bill C-42 as it was presented to the House. I am willing to wait until that diligent, thorough and intelligent committee of the House of Commons has finished its studies and brings in its recommendations.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. Since the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs just confirmed he does not favour wider application of the supply-management concept, such statement originally having been made in reply to my question concerning the possibility of setting up a broiler marketing board, I ask the minister if he favours the establishment of a broiler marketing board under the farm products marketing act. If so, how can he be of that view, considering the dichotomy developing between himself and the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs? Finally, will the minister tell the House—since we shall probably never see a repetition of today's double act in which two ministers make a statement—which minister will be responsible for implementing this strategy? Will it be himself, as Minister of Agriculture, or the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs?

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, my colleague said the question of a broiler marketing board is before cabinet. I am surprised at the hon. member even asking the question. Perhaps the hon. member is trying to cast doubt on this question. The hon. member for Elgin and others have raised this question under our Standing Order 43 procedures. They want to know why I am not going ahead with the establishment of a broiler marketing board. I suggest the hon. member should consult some of the people in his party who are concerned about broiler production, because perhaps they can lend a helping hand. When I have talked on this subject to members of his party outside the House and asked, "Have you spoken to the hon. member for St. John's East?" they have told me, "We have our own problems, too."

Mr. McGrath: Yes, but where does the minister stand?