

agriculture while consumers cannot afford to buy existing products. The form of assistance is an encouragement to farmers to produce less. They are told to change their production: instead of wheat they are told to grow rye or barley.

At the time I was in western Canada a few months ago, some university students in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and even Alberta were paying for their studies with wheat or barley because they did not have any money.

It is not wheat or barley which is lacking but money. They do not want to change the system. However, they want to control and socialize the farmers. The system works and they do not want to put money at the service of the people. Certainly not since the minister has been holding that post. He thought otherwise when he was one of us. He knows exactly what I mean and today he is ready to say the opposite of what I say.

Mr. Speaker, that is all I had to say.

[*English*]

Mr. Benjamin: Free enterprise—

Mr. Caouette: It is not free enterprise at all. It is the government's fault.

Mr. Benjamin: There is a difference.

Mr. Caouette: Yes, there is a difference.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, we are suggesting something and we are telling the minister about it. In fact, the government seems to be putting the cart before the horse. The minister is a farmer. He is perfectly aware that if you do that, it won't work. Therefore, let us find a solution. This solution does exist. The consumers must have more purchasing power so as to buy the products. If their purchasing power is too low, the products will not sell. Go into a few shops and you will see that there is no production problem in Canada. This bill is dealing again with production and not with consumption nor with the consumers. The people are asked to consume but they are not given the financial means to do so.

Mr. Speaker, Bill C-197 does not settle any problem at all. It promotes the establishment of a new government body to which bureaucrats will be appointed and instructed to go and see for themselves that people are starving in the Maritimes, in western Canada and in the province of Quebec. There are, in Ontario, corn producers who are facing over-production, and the same situation prevails

Farm Products Marketing Agencies Bill

everywhere in Canada. Instead of increasing the purchasing power of consumers, quotas are set or still, legislation like Bill C-197 is introduced, as if it might solve the problems of agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, I challenge the minister to get anything done under this bill. In two years from now, I shall still be here. I wish he will be here too, at least until the next election, because I could then tell him that his Bill C-197 has not settled anything. In fact, it will not have neither succeeded in checking inflation, in relieving the producer, nor especially in helping the consumer.

What we do suggest is the full application of the Social Credit principles, in which the minister sincerely believes in his heart. Only then will we be able to say that we have in Canada a flourishing agriculture.

Mr. Florian Côté (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, following the discussions that have taken place recently, I took it upon myself to take part in the debate. At first, I did not want to delay the passage of this bill, because farmers and farm associations have been anxiously waiting and calling for it for years. As a matter of fact, they were demanding it even before I came to this House, when I ran a farm and was a member of farm associations. At that time, we were asking the government to introduce a piece of legislation that would ensure the marketing of agricultural products in Canada. When this bill was introduced, I said to myself: This bill will be passed unanimously by the House without debate.

Last week, I received a telephone call from a representative of the Catholic Farmers Union of Quebec—even if some members of the opposition believe this bill is only a ghost—who thought the bill had already been passed and who told me that the Catholic Farmers Union wanted to take advantage of it to negotiate with the provinces the marketing of agricultural products within provincial boundaries.

• (3:50 p.m.)

I unfortunately had to point out to my former colleagues that the bill had not passed yet because some opposition members, unable to appreciate its real value, as they were unaware of the nature of marketing or production in each area of Canada, could not accept this bill, which they feel is only so much make believe.