

boxes. This indicates that the farmer receives a very small part of the food dollar in this country.

I suggest that these examples show that a decent return and profit on the farmers' labour can be obtained without a great impact on food prices at the other end of the scale.

I urge the House to send this Bill to committee so that we may have a chance to consider this concept that is supported by an increasing number of farmers from all over Canada. According to the press, approximately three weeks ago over 500 farmers met in Essex County in Windsor in a meeting to support the idea of parity pricing. Last Monday, I was invited by a farm group to a meeting of over 200 farmers. At least 150 farmers showed up in the City of London in support of the idea of parity pricing.

This concept is gaining support because Canadian farmers need these guarantees in order to stay in business. Since so many others in our society have guarantees, farmers are asking why they as well should not get their fair share from the market-place. They are saying that if they get their fair share, therefore more money and a guaranteed product, they will be able to keep more young people on the farm, thereby expanding our rural communities and creating jobs in the cities for the people of Canada as well.

[*Translation*]

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I only hope that all Hon. Members in this House will support this Bill this afternoon. It is a legislation that is very important for Canadian farmers and for the Canadian people as a whole. It is about parity prices based on production costs plus a return for the work put in by Canadian farmers. This Bill deals with five farm products, that is: wheat, barley, oats, pork and beef.

Mr. Speaker, let us keep in mind that as the situation of Canadian farmers improves, things get better for everyone of us across the country, because the basis of our economy, the backbone of our economy is the agricultural sector which provides food for the Canadian people and peoples all over the world.

[*English*]

I urge the House not talk out this Bill. I understand that we can probably come to an agreement, and for that I sincerely thank my colleagues.

● (1710)

I thank the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) and the Member from Alberta who is about to rise and I thank my colleagues from the Liberal Party. I look forward to having public hearings on this so the farmers of Canada—and it is a farm Bill—can be consulted and can have their say over the direction in which they want this economy to go for themselves and for their children.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Blais (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by con-

Parity Prices for Farm Products Act

gratulating my hon. friend from Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom) on raising the issue of price increases for farm producers in the House. I particularly appreciate what he said at the end of his speech, namely that if our farmers are in good shape, the rest of the economy is in pretty good shape too. It was refreshing to hear these words, especially from a Member of the Opposition. Before, we used to say: As long as housing starts are up, the economy is O.K. Now we can say the same about agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, this is a concern that I share with many Members of this House, and having a forward-looking agricultural industry and providing a decent return on the work and skills invested by farmers is essential to the vigour of our Canadian economy. I think all Members concerned about agriculture are aware of this.

However, although I agree with my hon. friend that his objective is a good one, the Bill he introduced today may not be the right answer at this time. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I hope that all Members of this House will realize the serious impact this Bill could have on the agricultural sector and the possibly unfortunate consequences it might have for our farmers and our external trade.

However, I think that the concept of guaranteeing farmers a decent return on their investment is certainly deserving of closer scrutiny. My friend the Hon. Member for Wetaskiwin (Mr. Schellenberger) will move later on to have the subject matter of this Bill referred to the Standing Committee on Agriculture. In fact, I think when my hon. friend spoke earlier he seemed to be agreeable to having the subject discussed in the agriculture committee.

The parity pricing concept seems an excellent idea. Its purpose is altogether admirable, namely to enable farmers to cover their production costs and make a decent profit. It is the very essence of our economic system. Would it not be marvelous if by adopting a Bill, we could make this dream come true? However, in the present context, things may not be as straightforward as all that.

[*English*]

I might add here that it was at the time when the European Economic Community moved to a system with very high domestic prices for its farmers similar to what is proposed in this Bill that its headaches with surpluses and subsidies began.

The United States has had a variety of experiences with parity pricing, some of it bad, some of it good. Yet even there, Mr. Speaker, the system is very different from the idea suggested in this legislation. The U.S. system attempts to affect farm prices so as to give producers the same purchasing power as against a certain historical period rather than relating them to costs of production.

I am particularly concerned, Mr. Speaker, about trying to make a cost-of-production pricing system work in Canada where we are so heavily dependent upon export markets. Exports account for nearly half of the Canadian net farm