

this motion forward. Perhaps it will prod the very slow-moving Minister of Agriculture. If it achieves this, then it deserves the support of all hon. members, especially those from rural and farming communities. For this I would commend him.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Mr. Speaker, I should like to say a few words on this bill as well, but I shall try to be brief.

[*Translation*]

I understand the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) wants a few minutes to participate in this debate, as well as the hon. member for Medicine Hat (Mr. Hargrave).

[*English*]

I hope we can make sure that the House has a chance to pass this resolution that is before us today. I also hope that we will see some of the principles and objectives put forward by the hon. member for Mackenzie (Mr. Korchinski) become legislation. I am not quite as optimistic as he is.

I have here a newspaper clipping from March of last year. It is a Canadian Press report dealing with the then government's proposal for a new income stabilization plan for cattle producers. It reads as follows:

Cattlemen are finding proposed changes to federal programs for stabilizing farm income 'too rich for their blood,' Progressive Conservative Bert Hargrave said Thursday.

The proposal to beef up farm incomes in times of low prices reminds the cattlemen of 1976 when they produced a record number of animals only to see low prices drop even further as 186 million pounds of imported meat flooded the country, he told the Commons agriculture committee.

As I said at the beginning, I should like to leave some time available so that the hon. member for Medicine Hat (Mr. Hargrave) can speak. I hope he has changed his tune and will support the intent of the resolution that is before us. Indeed, I hope the government does so as well.

The resolution covers several areas, but primarily the stabilization of farm income. I think any such plan should be based on the six principles which I will put forward.

First, payouts would be established by a cost of production figure, established once each year. It is important to have that flexibility because there are changing production costs for farmers across the country.

Second, participation should be voluntary, with federal and producer contributions.

Third, the plan should be national in scope. Various plans for different provinces could balkanize the country and make the plans less effective, as fewer farmers would be involved in each. This would make the situation worse for the producers and for the country.

Fourth, there should be limits of eligibility for each farmer. This would reduce the problem of overproduction and would encourage the maintenance of efficient family farm operations.

Cash Assurance Program

Fifth, producers would apply for assistance or registered contributions at the end of the year through an application form and proof of sale.

Sixth, stabilization plans should work closely with marketing boards and with import legislation to stabilize the entire industry. I do not think a farm stabilization program or an income assurance program is enough by itself.

The hon. member for Medicine Hat has done a very thorough study on beef production. I am sure he would agree that we need import legislation. We should also have marketing boards to help stabilize the production of all crops in this country. We already have national marketing boards for turkeys, eggs, broiler chickens and industrial milk, but I think we need the same kind of planning and supply management in many other areas. I should like to outline some of the reasons for this.

An article in the *Ottawa Citizen* of November 24 had the headline, "Starving Our Own—Loss of Prime Farm Land Hurting Canada's Food Output". This is a topic on which I have spoken many times in this House and outside. Many hon. members, particularly those from urban Canada, seem to believe that this country is the bread basket of the world and that we have an endless supply of food and an endless potential for the production for food.

The article reports that at a recent conference held in Ottawa, a number of scientists expressed concern that our country will soon not be able to feed itself unless there is a radical change in the way we produce food. I hope that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) and the government will start the wheels turning toward a change in agricultural policy in this country.

I should like to quote a few excerpts from this article, Mr. Speaker. The first one reads as follows:

Canadians are now dependent on foreign farmers for all foodstuff except grain, largely as a result of the mismanagement of Ontario's prime farm land, scientists attending an Ottawa conference sponsored by Agriculture Canada said Friday.

• (1740)

Referring to Dr. Julien Dumanski, the report quoted him as saying:

—for the first time in our history, Canada appears to be losing its (agricultural) production potential.

The actual potential to produce food now appears to be lost. It is important that the political wing of the government—the minister, the cabinet, the parliamentary secretary—and members of this House, give heed to what the public servants are saying in this country. He went on to say:

If action is not taken to preserve the quality land bases to protect the farming industry, Canada could become forever dependent on foreign foodstuffs.

We still have options which can reverse the trend, but action must be taken soon.

In 1976 alone, the combined effect of losing prime farmland and opening up marginal lands reduced the country's agricultural production potential by an equivalent of 38,000 hectares.

I checked the figures, and 1976 is the most recent statistical year that we have. Evidence that I have seen indicates that the