

● (1210)

I also have a question concerning Clause 22(1) of the Bill. As it is presently drafted, the Bill is organized in such a way that if a person convicted of certain offences under subsection 21(3) and subject to a fine is in default of that fine, no prison punishment will be imposed. Why is that? From a cursory reading of the Bill, it seems to suggest that if the individual does not pay his fine, nothing else will be done to him or he will not be put in jail. I am wondering why it is explained in those particular terms. It is almost an open invitation to someone not to pay a fine levied against him, knowing that nothing else will happen. Perhaps there is a reasonable explanation which the Parliamentary Secretary could share with the House. However, I must say that I am a little concerned about the way in which it is presently drafted, that if someone does not pay a fine levied against him, he will not be imprisoned.

Mr. Hovdebo: They are trying to be humane.

Mr. Boudria: Perhaps the Government is trying to be humane but, all puns aside, I must say that we are dealing with an important issue—the preservation of the meat inspection system. The Parliamentary Secretary said that all Canadians are very proud of the system and that it is second to none in the world. We would want to ensure that the system remains as good and as strong as it is now. Surely an indication that a default in payment of a fine would not be further prosecuted would not enhance the chances of the legislation being observed by individuals in that particular line of business.

In closing, of course our Party is in agreement with the provisions of the Bill relating to the Charter of Rights. We want our laws to adhere to and respect the Charter of Rights. Of course we are in agreement with that part of the Bill and with the general principle of consolidation. However, we are concerned with the general trend of the Government to increase inspection fees. We feel that inspection fees, be they on meat products or any other agricultural product, are for the benefit of consumers generally and therefore should not be paid for by farmers. If ever there was a time when implementing inspection fees for Canadian farmers would be appropriate—and I am not sure there will ever be such a time—surely that time is not now with the very difficult economic conditions with which Canadian farmers have to live. The \$32.3 million which will be generated by the Government in recovering inspection fees will not be a saving, if it causes a similar amount of financial default, bankruptcy or otherwise on the part of Canadian farmers.

I reiterate that position on behalf of our Party to the Parliamentary Secretary, in the hope that he will be able to convince his colleague and friend, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson), not to levy those exorbitant charges on Canadian farmers.

Mr. Vic Althouse (Humboldt-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the presentation of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Blais). The Bill

Meat Inspection Act

itself purports to tie together some old meat inspection laws. It is an attempt to consolidate the old Humane Slaughter of Food Animals Act, the Meat and Canned Foods Act and the Meat Inspection Act and replace them with this Bill which is before us at the moment and is known as Bill C-33.

When I listened to the Hon. Member for Bellechasse, I was left with the impression that the only reason for introducing the Bill was because the old ones were 70 years or 80 years old. I guess they wanted it on new paper. I am not sure that the humane slaughter of animals will be extended to some provincial jurisdiction under the provisions of the Bill, but that is what I understood the Parliamentary Secretary to say.

The Hon. Member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell (Mr. Boudria) saw this as an attempt to bring the Act up to the provisions required by the Charter of Rights, since that is about to come into play. I really question why the whole Bill was necessary if it was only to increase humane slaughter provisions and provide for adherence to the Charter. One of the all-encompassing Bills which occur from time when minor amendments are made to bring laws up to current practice or requirements of the Charter could have been used in this case.

As I look at this Bill and discuss its subject matter, I realize a number of questions were not answered in the dissertation of the Hon. Member for Bellechasse. I hope we will be able to get answers from the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) when the Bill goes before committee. I have some suspicion that it is a necessity to go along with the cost recovery program announced by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) last November.

Some of the requirements listed in the mid section of the Bill seem to look forward to that and provide some startling power or lack of power in terms of the frequency of inspection levels program initiated under the previous Minister of Agriculture. It seems that it is being pursued with even more haste by the current Minister. In addition, the frequency of inspection levels program was an effort by the Department of Agriculture to pull back from the financing of the inspection of meat products and some canned products in plants and leave inspections up to the jurisdiction of the plants themselves. In other words, the plants would be responsible for keeping the public's interest at heart and for their own monitoring. They would provide their own inspectors, but the rules would continue to be set by the federal Government. Plant employees would be hired to look after the regulations and to make certain that their employers adhered to the rules. If that is not a conflict of interest, I do not know what is. This Government has proposed to spread that even further so that inspections would be conducted at many more places. The responsibility for hiring and training inspectors and looking after inspections, again in the public interest, would fall with the corporation hiring the inspector.

There are some strange things in the Act. My hon. friend in the Liberal Party alluded to some of them. He indicated that Clause 22 pointed out that if fines imposed as punishment were not paid, they would just rest. He failed to explain that there is a subsection indicating that the federal Government