

Agriculture

I base my view on the reports that come to me of meetings held in different parts of the country and on what the producers are saying. Some of them are even taking votes and the vast majority have voted for a better marketing system for their product.

Potato farmers in eastern Canada have just decided to form a marketing agency and I am confident that in a few years' time they will be operating a supply management system that gives them the same benefits enjoyed by dairy farmers and egg producers in other parts of Canada.

Not all commodities need national supply management to ensure an adequate return to the producer. There are more than 100 marketing boards across the country, operated by producers, helping them market their produce. For instance, Alberta has some of the strongest provincial marketing boards in the country and they are continuing to forge ahead. The Alberta pork producers have taken over a pork processing plant in Alberta and one in British Columbia. As directors, they have famous people who used to be members of this House—Dr. Hugh Horner and Dr. Bert Herridge, just to mention a couple of them.

Are these men incapable of making judgments and decisions? We all recognize them as capable men who have been very successful in other enterprises and they will be successful in this one. Why would Dr. Herridge offer his services as a member of a three-person beef commission which recommended a better system of marketing beef? It is because he recognized the failures of the beef marketing system which had been there since time immemorial. We had been marketing beef in a very old fashioned way. Not all producers need this type of system, but some of them do. The marketing boards provide a wide range of services for promotion, negotiating contracts, central selling and operating joint storage facilities.

Producers can accomplish many things by joining together to market their product. Five large supermarket chains distribute 65 per cent of the food that goes to the consumers of Canada. That means that over 300,000 farmers are trying to deal with five giants. The only way they can do that efficiently is by organizing themselves into a group that can negotiate a fair deal for them. Some of them are doing this. They are doing a good job and they are not ripping off the public.

I am not spending millions of dollars on those programs, Mr. Speaker. For instance, I am not spending one penny on the poultry industry. The hon. member for Huron-Bruce was formerly a member of a board in Ontario so he knows that there are contractual marketing boards in good old Tory Ontario. I grew crops for them at one time for vegetable processors and they did not give me anything for nothing, but if I were efficient and produced according to my contract, I could make a very good living. The hon. member knows that.

The farmers of Ontario who are operating under that system do not write letters to him or to me. They are not going bankrupt and they are making a decent living. There is the same kind of thing in some of the other provinces. Indeed, there are 110 such systems in Canada today. The jackasses who say that I created the marketing boards and who condemn

marketing boards should investigate to find out how fair they are. There are some people who think—even though our farmers are efficient—that they should not have any say in how their product is marketed. I am not saying there are not even some within government who think that way or some within the civil service who think that way, but there are certainly some in society who think that way also. This country is one of the few which has granted that right to producers. It was granted by legislative assemblies and this House. A Conservative Prime Minister, R. B. Bennett, established the Canadian Wheat Board and that is the only time a marketing board was imposed in this country. He saw the necessity to put fairness into wheat marketing because of the unfair system that existed at that time.

● (1630)

Mr. Justice Emmett Hall is not known for his liberalism. His report on the western grain transportation system was really a western Canadian agricultural report. What did he say? He said that if there was anything obvious to him, it was pretty near unanimous support for the Canadian Wheat Board, which was evident in nearly all of his reports on western Canada. When we have loud noise and things like that, we have wind which causes drought. There is a drought here in the intelligentsia on agriculture today, slightly to your left at the present time, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. I think there were two speakers before the minister. Courtesy was extended to both of them. I would invite hon. members to extend the same courtesy to the minister.

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the national commodities that are marketed in a national forum, those with price setting capabilities which use a cost pricing formula, hon. members know that the products which are sold stay much below the inflation rate for food in Canada. If all products had stayed at about that rate, which is 9 per cent or 9.5 per cent, we would be the utopia of the world. But the products not grown under that system are the ones which are much higher.

Do hon. members remember there ever being a shortage of eggs, broilers, turkeys, etc., on the market? There never has. I have never given those producers one penny of taxpayers' dollars. I challenge anyone to find an industry, such as the egg industry producing one of the most perishable products in the world, which loses less than one half of 1 per cent of production. The loss is so small that you cannot measure it. In fact, there is no measure for it. The highest quality is put on the marketplace. Efficiency has never been greater in the egg industry than it is now. It used to take eight pounds of feed to produce a dozen eggs. Now it takes less than four pounds of feed to produce a dozen eggs. Up to one third of the laying crop used to be lost to mortality; they died trying to lay eggs. Now veterinarians and scientists have come up with serums, with feeding and nutrition programs, less than one half of 1 per cent of the crop is lost. The efficiency that has crept into the egg production system of this nation is greater than nearly any other part of our society. You hear these know-nothings