

Agricultural Stabilization Act

constructive, but I want them to be clearly understood. The minister has not yet entirely shot himself down, but if he keeps on making statements without finding answers, the farmers will have no choice but to send the Liberals to the same place the Liberals were sent in the United Kingdom many long years ago.

[Translation]

Mr. Eudore Allard (Rimouski): Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to say a few words on the important Bill C-50, concerning the marketing of agricultural commodities. We know that there have been problems in this area for a long time and that for many years we have tried to solve them in different ways, either by bringing in new solutions or else by proposing amendments to existing ones.

One of the purposes of the proposed bill would be to shorten from ten to five years the period from which the base price for each agricultural commodity is determined, and also to alter in the manner prescribed the method of establishing the prescribed price in relation to a named commodity and to a designated commodity.

Mr. Speaker, since the first purpose of this bill is to protect farm producers, I agree entirely with the Minister of Agriculture that the government should establish a period which would be more equitable for producers.

It is a well known fact that a quart of milk is now worth 51 cents. Now, there are forty quarts in every hundred weight of milk, so the consumer pays \$20.40 for 100 pounds of milk. I feel this is extravagant, considering the producer gets approximately \$12 or less a hundredweight. Maybe the Minister of Agriculture could tell us where the difference goes.

I also find the price of beef unbelievable. It has been experiencing an astronomical increase. What does the producer get? Nothing at all, considering he sells his beef at approximately the same price as before. Clearly, the profits are going to the big corporations which enjoy the government's protection.

The time has come for new measures to extend fair treatment to both producers and consumers. Obviously, producers are doing the utmost to provide Canadian citizens with adequate quantities of food.

Therefore, I ask the government once more to discharge their responsibilities and meet the people's demands. In order to meet the demands of producers and consumers, the present majority government must take the necessary steps to introduce sensible and efficient measures to solve the present situation. I have doubts, however, whether a logical and sensible approach can be used under the current system.

In December last, a number of economists met in Washington. They spent a few days together discussing inflation, but after those talks everyone went back home empty-handed because no one could find a solution to the inflation everyone is complaining about. Mr. Speaker, that is where we are at with those economists of all sorts and our present system of indebtedness.

For years now, we have been suggesting very sensible and practical solutions to inflation. One of them is the compensated discount which is paid directly to the consumer through Statistics Canada, a discount that would

[Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain).]

ensure producers a just return while allowing consumers to pay a reasonable price for their vital needs.

There is one solution the government should reflect upon instead of losing its head as it is now doing. That infernal inflationary spiral must be checked for it is leading us to bankruptcy.

Mr. Speaker, as I said before, compensated discount is an ideal mechanism to check this inflation that is undermining our society. If we persist in remaining inactive in the face of this situation, tomorrow may be too late: we will be on the verge of bankruptcy.

● (2100)

[English]

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I do not know of any subject which, in terms either of our country or of the world, is more important than agriculture. I do not know of any matter that is more fundamental to our well being as a nation, and indeed to the well being of the world, than the producing arts undertaken by the farmers of Canada.

I think that there has been a tendency from time to time—and unfortunately the minister himself has been one of the factors that have led to this tendency, and indeed has promoted it—to place the producing elements of the community against the consuming elements. To this extent I think he has done the community itself a great disservice and perhaps he has done agriculture a great disservice as well.

The office of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) does not require him merely to speak in the cabinet for the farmer. He has a duty as well to speak for the consumer. And he has a duty to speak in cabinet not just for the farmer or the consumer of this country, but also for the consumers of the world to whom a duty is owed by all people in a productive society such as ours. He has a duty to speak on behalf of the farmers of the world in the sense of the potential farmers who could be aided by Canadian technology being transplanted to other places less fortunate and less advanced. His duty, if I can put it that way, is not just to deal with agriculture from the point of view of the producer involved in it—although that is perhaps his prime duty—but to deal with agriculture as it affects the whole economy, from the stable to the table. This, in some respects, the minister has not done, and in those respects he has failed.

I think he has failed as well to supply certain answers to the problems that face Canadians. But he has been quite good, I think, at pointing out to those who cannot understand, perhaps because of differences of background and differences of interest, that there are problems with respect to agriculture.

The hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton), who made a very excellent speech a few moments ago, spoke about the great number of speeches that the minister has made, and suggested to the minister that perhaps his brain ought to catch up with his jaw. I have one of the minister's speeches in my hand. What he has illustrated in the course of those speeches is that in terms of agriculture he can point the strongest finger in the most direct way at all the problems affecting agricul-