

Grain Prices

ments. This is particularly important concerning food products which are increasing in volume in international trade. I hope that hon. members in all parties who may read this speech will keep up the fight. I made a major speech on this subject in 1964. I have attended United Nations meetings. I have attended international parliamentary meetings in Australia and Senegal. I have worked with great care on the presentations of all nations at the United Nations conferences on trade and development. All parties in this House supported this stand. But what I am really saying here is that I hope that even though we are trying to help our producers to stabilize their incomes and prices in our country, we still work toward an international framework to stabilize those prices, not to set the prices, but to determine the rule of law for the competition between those floors and ceilings.

Canada led the world with the international meat agreement in 1949, which was destroyed in 1966-67, with the United States, Canada and Australia. Now we must get back on the road together. I know that Members of Parliament from all parties have met with their counterparts in the United States. Some have spoken to Members of Parliament in Australia. There is no parliament left in Argentina, but we are in contact. We know that the Argentinians sent their representatives here to Ottawa on April 24 and 25. So did Australia, Canada, the United States and the Europeans. The motion for the restoration of international agreement has been placed. But we in Canada who have led the way for the world in international commodity agreements should continue to lead the way. If it is very important in relation to food for world security and stability, it is also equally important in relation to the other resources, such as the forestry resources and particularly this very valuable mining resource of ours.

I want to thank the House for letting me make these comments of my own. In addition to what the hon. member for Wetaskiwin said in his attempt to bring just a little common sense to this announcement date, not only on the timing one month in advance but also on the cost of production, I would like to say that we also have some responsibilities, wherever we are, to keep up this pressure so that the producers of the world unite together, sit down with the consumers and work out a rule of law, because these products must be stabilized or either the producer or the consumer will be destroyed. There should be a rule of law placed on these variable prices. Nature cannot be controlled, but we can control, to a reasonable degree, the stability of prices in world trade.

I simply wanted to ask the hon. member who spoke for the government today to please say to the minister in the other place who is responsible, "Do not just sit there. Do something. All you must do is to put a reference before the committee, and if you can move this one step further it would help us all and we could get this very simple motion off the books."

● (1640)

Mr. Gilbert Parent (Welland): Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Parent: I thank the members for the thunderous applause they afforded me this afternoon.

It is always good for me to enter into a debate with the distinguished Member of Parliament for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton). Earlier on, when Mr. Diefenbaker was prime minister, he was the minister of agriculture. I regret that the hon. member for Wetaskiwin (Mr. Schellenberger) is not able to be with us today. It may seem strange to some members that I would be intervening in this particular debate. There are some reasons why I have come forward. I represent a riding which is a twin of the Wetaskiwin riding. I have had voluminous correspondence with constituents of that riding, as well as with many friends I met there over the last three years. I believe that the problems that are being faced in Wetaskiwin are problems that are being faced throughout the west, in the grain-growing provinces.

The objective of this motion is quite reasonable and I have no quarrel whatsoever with it. It must be pointed out, however, in asking for the type of protection considered here, that there already is a great deal of protection in place for the producer. I have used the term "protection", which is the word the member for Wetaskiwin used in his motion. Canadian producers, Mr. Speaker, must be protected, and they want protection. They have at their disposal a number of policies and instruments which enable them to continue producing without introducing the additional regulation and intervention which cost of production, full price, would entail.

First and foremost in the form of protection is the Canadian Wheat Board. Its mandate is to market grains on the producers' behalf at the best possible return. Who could argue with anything as straightforward as that? The board continues to do an excellent job. The Canadian producer obtains returns on the world marketplace which compare favourably with other exporting countries.

At the end of the month of April, Senator Hazen Argue, who sits in the other place and who is the Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, tabled the board's 1980-81 report. It says that the sale value of last year's crop was a record \$5.6 billion. The value of the grain delivered in the 1980-81 crop topped the previous record of about \$3.9 billion, set a year earlier. These kinds of returns are vital to prairie producers, facing ever-increasing farm input costs, with high interest rates. The board is just the agency to ensure the highest returns possible in the world markets.

The farmers were able to deliver all the grain they wanted and farm carryovers were lower than for many years, at the end of the crop year, this, Mr. Speaker, in spite of drought conditions early in the crop year. The report said that the 1980 crop year was better than the ten-year average and grain exports at 23.5 million tonnes were just a shade under the record of the previous year.

Senator Argue said, according to the Release of May 28, 1982, that there are no guarantees in the grain business, what with the fickle weather and changing economic conditions, and shifting trading patterns, but it is still the brightest light in the economy right now. It was noted that we were able to establish