

Parity Prices for Farm Products Act

● (1700)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS—PUBLIC BILLS

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): Is there unanimous consent for the House to proceed to item No. 30?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

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PARITY PRICES FOR FARM PRODUCTS ACT

MEASURE TO ENACT

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville) moved that Bill C-215, an Act respecting parity prices for farm products be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Agriculture.

He said: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-215 would establish a parity price for five different farm products that humans consume domestically in this country: wheat, oats and barley, pork and beef.

Parity price is defined in this Bill as a price based on the cost of production and a decent profit for the work that a farmer puts into producing his or her product. In the case of wheat, this would cover 8 per cent to 10 per cent of our production of wheat since that is what we consume domestically. A parity price might be \$10 or \$11 a bushel because that is what many farm economists estimate it would cost to produce a bushel of wheat for a decent return to the farmers of Canada.

This Bill would not impose anything on anyone. It indicates that before there is a parity price, there must be a democratic vote by the producers, whether hog producers or beef producers. If it is decided they do not want to follow this direction, there would not be a parity price, an agency or commission established in that particular field. The Bill is democratic and would give a guarantee to the farmers of this land for at least some of the products that they are producing.

Many groups in our society have guarantees. Trade unions are organized and often have cost of living allowances each year. Members of Parliament have a clause which provides an adjustment every year according to the cost of living. Many other people often have increases due to the cost of living increases. Doctors' fees, lawyers' fees and architects' fees are based on what it costs to run their offices, pay their staff and provide a good standard of living for themselves and their families in accordance with the work they do to provide their particular service.

My argument for this Bill is that farmers are no different. They need those guarantees for the products they produce, and if the farmers get that kind of guarantee it will not only be useful to farmers but indeed to all Canadians. The fact that a farmer will be able to spend more means that there will be jobs

for young people in our towns and cities. The fact that he has more money to spend will stimulate the economy in places like Brantford where White Farm equipment is in trouble and Massey Ferguson produces their combines and other implements for use by all Canadian farmers.

My argument today is that this Bill is not only an agricultural Bill but is an economic Bill that will create jobs for many Canadians. It will also give farmers greater control over their destiny by providing a means of intervening in the marketplace and having some direction over the price they will get for a particular commodity.

I want particularly to thank farmers for their support of this concept of parity pricing. I want to thank members of the Conservative and the Liberal Parties for the support they have given to the idea of parity pricing. Perhaps there can be an understanding later this afternoon to refer the subject matter of this Bill to the Agriculture Committee for study and public hearings so that the farmers of this country may give their input.

I am not wedded to all the details of this Bill. It is important to refer this Bill to the Agriculture Committee so that we may go through it clause by clause and consult the farmers of this country in order to have their opinion of parity pricing. What better way is there to consult the farmers of Canada than to have public hearings? The farm union, the Wheat Pool, the Canadian agricultural movement and all the other farm organizations and commodity groups, including UPA and others, can have some input into how they want to develop.

I say to Hon. Members who are not in favour of subsidies that the farmers who support this Bill have adopted a slogan which states "parity, not charity". They are not asking for charity or hand-outs.

This Bill does not provide for Government subsidies or spending. It merely stipulates that farmers should be getting a fair price from the market-place for the wheat, the oats, the barley, the hog or whatever commodity is involved. It is the market-place that will pay the farmer for that commodity.

Let me give some examples of parity pricing. Let us consider wheat that goes to the millers to make Canadian bread. If the price of wheat were increased by \$5 a bushel, there would be a corresponding increase of only eight cents a loaf in the price of bread. I suggest that the extra eight cents a loaf for bread is a small price to pay to give farmers an extra \$5 a bushel for the grain they are producing that goes into making that bread.

Another example concerns beer. There might be one or two Members in the House who drink beer once in a while. If the price of beer increased by 40 cents a dozen bottles, and that increase were passed on directly to the farmers, the price of malting barley would rise by \$10 a bushel. Therefore, the farmer would get an extra \$10 a bushel for malting barley as a result of a 40-cent increase per dozen bottles of beer. I could cite many other examples. The cost of processing and advertising the coupons that appear on cornflakes boxes is more than the farmer receives for the corn that goes into those cornflakes