

Prairie Farm Assistance Act

because private and public interests cannot work together. The same concerns apply to plant research. Public institutions suffer when private interests begin to gain control.

The government advocates the fragmentation of public plant research by its support of plant patent legislation. Corporate and multinational involvement in seed breeding will neglect the specific need of the Canadian market. It has happened in pesticide controls and is likely to happen in seed controls. Pesticide controls have been developed for other climates and markets. By shifting to small and private research, the process may be endangered and will not guarantee that optimum levels of research will be maintained.

There is a danger that this type of foundation will fund agrichemical firms, and these firms have demonstrated that private research focuses on development rather than research. Byron Beeler of Ciba-Geigy told the Canada Grains Council that he personally sees research divided into the discovery phase, and the exploitation phase; that discovery research will continue in the public institutions. Conversely, he believes that the exploitation of research can best be done by private enterprise.

In general, there is a need to support long-term research that is directed in the public interest. Public interest is not restricted to producers, but to Canadians. There is a need for an integrated food policy for Canada, and only the central government can orchestrate the development and realization of such a policy.

I appreciate the suggestion of the hon. member that the trustees of such a fund would be producers. This recognizes the dependence the producers have on research and development in agriculture. However, there are two problems inherent in this suggestion. First, the lack of input of non-board people fails to address the very serious problem of an integrated food policy for Canada.

● (1730)

The danger exists that the role of producers in this instance could lead to a more widespread belief that producers, and not Canadians as a whole, should be responsible for agricultural research. It is very necessary that we continue to recognize that basic research in agriculture in Canada should be funded by all the people of Canada, not only the producers.

In conclusion, I agree that the money should be taken out of general trust funds and put to work for the farmers, to whom it really belongs. I agree also there is a great need for research, and that is a good place to put the money. Unless the government is ready to come up with a more co-ordinated project which will not bury these funds or lose them to the farmers, unless the government is willing to refer the content of the measure to the committee, as suggested by the hon. member, then I think we should pass this bill in its present form so we make use of these funds as quickly as possible.

Again I commend the hon. member for Moose Jaw for his initiative in bringing forth this bill. If it does not pass, I hope at least the content of it will have some effect on the development and expansion of research in agriculture.

Hon. Alvin Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain): Mr. Speaker, my remarks will deal with other parts of this bill which have been debated. The part I refer to is the repeal of the Prairie Farm Assistance Act.

I had the promise of a minister of the Crown, the Hon. Mitchell Sharp, that the PFAA would not be abolished or repealed until certain things happened. These things have not happened, yet I am standing in my place today to say I am withdrawing my objection and freeing the government from any promise made by that minister, Mr. Sharp.

What I am talking about here is that the PFAA was good legislation. Money was collected from the farmers and paid for crop loss, apportioned where the need was the greatest. Unfortunately a political machine developed around this organization. People were hired on a political basis and certain decisions were made on political grounds.

In 1959 Parliament passed the crop insurance legislation. Now that this crop insurance legislation is widely accepted by farmers on the prairies, the Prairie Farm Assistance Act has become obsolete and, therefore, should be repealed. In the 1974 election certain queer and distorted things began to happen. After the election was over several members of the House—the hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Towers), the hon. member for Swift Current-Maple Creek (Mr. Hamilton), and myself—did certain things. We reported these happenings to the Auditor General's department. Later on we reported the information to the criminal fraud squad of the RCMP. Charges were laid against some of the people who had done the things I have mentioned. The case was recommended by the magistrate at the preliminary hearing to go to court. That case has never been to court because the Attorney General for Saskatchewan, Mr. Romanow, has seen fit not to let it go to trial. Since this is a responsibility of the province, there is nothing the federal government can do about it.

The part I have not mentioned is that in addition to the criminal fraud which took place, the stealing of the farmers' money to be spent on political purposes, there was political fraud. This political fraud was aimed, to my certain knowledge, at three Conservatives and one NDP. It is not the type of thing one wants to mention. I think the supporters of the NDP in my area, certainly the supporters of the Conservative Party, and I am very sure all the supporters of the Liberal Party, wish it would die and go away. In essence I am saying I am prepared to let it die and go away; I hope it does not happen again. I just wanted to get this intervention on the record because of my personal feelings and my stand. As a Privy Councillor I think I have some responsibility to maintain the law in Canada. When I see the law broken, I think it is my duty to do what I can to report it and to see what action can be taken. I have never had the chance to bring before the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections what that political fraud was, to let my fellow colleagues in Parliament judge what happened and make whatever ruling was necessary.

I am giving up that right to my privileges for the purpose of letting this very positive proposal of the hon. member for