

Agricultural Stabilization Act

Mr. Horner: I would think that Alberta hogs are consumed all across Canada. Alberta produces about 22 per cent of Canada's hogs. It does not have 22 per cent of the Canadian population; therefore it has to export hogs to all parts of this country and to all parts of the world if possible.

● (1230)

The point I am making is that when I see inefficiencies in agriculture I become concerned because I know they effect the consumer who eventually rebels against the higher prices which result. Meat is a commodity on which consumers generally focuses. I wish they knew what a good buy it is today. Officials of the meat marketing inquiry set up by the Minister of Agriculture have not found many inefficiencies in the beef industry.

I am concerned about the other powers granted to this inward-looking Minister of Agriculture. I am concerned that the inefficiencies of the poultry and hog industries will invade the beef industry. I could not let Bill C-50 pass without uttering my concern, without warning the minister and his executives, and the chairman of the committee on agriculture who plays an important role in government legislation, to be on guard. Beef is one of the big consumer commodities in Canada; we consume more beef than we do poultry or pork.

It is we, the politicians, who have caused inefficiencies in the pork and poultry industries. The politicians in British Columbia, in Alberta—all over Canada—have caused inefficiencies in the agricultural industry and this has increased the cost to the consumer. The consumer is "Mr. Power" today and politicians should be aware of that fact. My only fear is that the consumer will not register that concern where it can be felt, at the ballot box, and thus condemn this government for bringing inefficiency to the agricultural industry.

I say to the chairman of the agriculture committee, to you, Madam Speaker, and to the Minister of Agriculture, "Be on guard. Do not allow any more inefficiencies to be created in the industry, because it will mean higher prices to the consumers of Canada and the consumers of the world." As an agricultural producer myself, I believe the world is my market. The Canadian consumer is part of that world market. The Minister of Agriculture says, "Try to get into some of the world markets". I know it is difficult, but other ministers of agriculture in past years have made valiant attempts to get in and have been successful. Nothing comes easily.

Mr. Turner (London East): What about Bennett? He was going to blast his way into world markets.

Mr. Horner: Madam Speaker, I did not know that the hon. member for London East (Mr. Turner) was old enough to remember Bennett.

Mr. Turner (London East): I remember him quite well.

Mr. Horner: If we want to discuss the agricultural problems of the thirties, I would remind the hon. member that the United States buried the equivalent of one year's production of Canadian hogs rather than try to market them. Bennett at least tried to market them; he did not

[Mr. Whelan.]

have to buy them and bury them as the United States did. All I want is that the Minister of Agriculture try to market our products. I know world markets are difficult. I also know that the Canadian consumer is concerned about cost. Don't create interference, try to market. Don't give up. Don't be like the hon. member for London East and say world markets are difficult and that 30 or 40 years ago Bennett tried to break in and was not successful, so why try now. Surely we have some new spirit; we do not have to rely on old members like the hon. member for London East. We should get out and try to sell.

The world is our market and we have the ability to produce as efficiently as anybody. The biggest drawback to the agricultural industry today is government interference. We should not let the Minister of Agriculture interfere too much, because interference is inefficient and inefficiency in marketing means increases in price.

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): Madam Speaker, having listened to the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner), I am moved to speak for three minutes, although it might be four. I should like to remind the hon. member for Crowfoot that his fears are all in one direction and mine are in the opposite direction. This is a typical piece of Liberal legislation which tries to run down the middle of the road. I would remind the minister that is where all the accidents happen.

I do not think the legislation goes far enough. The hon. member for Crowfoot and his colleagues think it goes too far; but there is nothing new about our disagreement. The concept of supply-management did not emanate from the NDP; it was put forward by agribusiness. For the last 20 years they have talked about supply management and making agricultural production and processing more efficient. Many of them are corporate enterprises which have run the small farmer out of business. The policy of the New Democratic Party is guaranteed prices with full production. In a hungry world we see no reason why full production should be curtailed in respect of any commodity in Canada. We could be the factory of the world. It is the responsibility of the nation as a whole to help producers receive guaranteed prices and to encourage them to achieve full production.

In a brief to the Standing Committee on Agriculture, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture made the following statement:

It is our understanding that the purpose of this legislation is to make more certain, and more adequate in relation to production costs, the level of price guarantees provided for agricultural commodities by the federal government or jointly by the federal and provincial governments and producers.

This purpose we wholly support. It will be found to be increasingly intolerable if agricultural producers are subjected to the extreme degree of price and income insecurity that has been their lot, for the most part, up until the present time.

The point made by the CFA is that it is a free and open market that has kept agricultural producers in a situation they call "intolerable if agricultural producers are subjected to the extreme degree of price and income insecurity". It is that same free and open market that has caused governments of all political stripes to interfere in the marketplace in an attempt to obtain some security for the Canadian producer. The CFA brief also states: