

Prairie Farm Assistance Act

questions that will not be asked by the fraud squad or by the Auditor General, to track down this person who is trying to build up once more the political machine which dominated western Canada for so long. This rebirth of the Gardiner machine is not good for the prairies and not good for the country. The PFAA was good legislation although it had to be amended and made more workable, but why did they ruin it by making it a political tool of a political party? The Diefenbaker government cleaned it up at great political risk, and now it is back again.

We are being asked to repeal legislation whose author we should have been praising for having brought it into effect and making it a genuine monument. I am referring now to the Right Hon. James G. Gardiner who brought in the legislation nearly 40 years ago. Now this legislation is ending with a whimper and a horrible smell. I do not know who is responsible. I have my own suspicions about ambitious politicians in Saskatchewan who aspire to even greater things.

I want to speak for all farmers of all political persuasions when I say that agriculture should not be made a political football. It will require the best efforts of all political parties, working together, to try to get the agricultural sector to do the job that the world is demanding of it. I believe that the way to assist agriculture to do the job that the world expects of it in the next 25 years is to put agriculture in Canada under one minister. The division of the agriculture portfolio into four or five sections, all with responsibilities leading up to various ministers, is a multiple schizophrenia that must stop. I know that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan), who has had this portfolio for 2½ years, has set up an office in Regina and staffed it with a very able man. I thought this office was being set up so that the department could get a true representation of what the west thought, fed right to the minister. I thought that office was being set up to balance off the great political power of the crown prince of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Benjamin: What was that?

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain): There is a deaf man to my left. I said, "the crown prince of Saskatchewan." What I fear is that the office which the minister has set up in Regina has become part of this political machine. When birds of a feather flock together, one gets the idea that something is going to happen.

I suggest to the Minister of Agriculture that he take the lead. I have suggested to him that if he will join us in this motion to take the subject matter before the standing committee so that he can deal with the monetary parts looked after by the Auditor General and the criminal parts looked after by the RCMP. Also we should look into the political parts to see if we can get at the truth. Then it would be evident to the western farmers that the government is not trying to cover up this whole smelly mess. The way to kill this political machine on the prairies is to get it out in the open here. Let us take a good look at it. We trust the Minister of Agriculture to fight for the farmers. We, in turn, will fight to see that agriculture is made whole again and that we get ARDA, PFRA, and the whole question of incomes policy back under the Department of Agriculture. All these things that are so dependent on a unified policy

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

should be run by some one who knows what the target is. Then we can gear up agriculture to its maximum efficiency.

● (1620)

If politicians want to build political machines, let us not have them built on the backs of many of the farmers. Let us not have them built on the backs of the men who will be asked to make maximum efforts in the next 25 years to produce for the world. Let us use some other method, but let us not use agriculture to build a political machine in western Canada.

The motion I have outlined will be moved later on by one of my colleagues, and I strongly suggest to the hon. members of the government party that they do not hide all the truth of this smelly mess from the people of the west. I suggest that they bring it out into the open, get it cleaned up, and let the farmers go to work to do their job. Let us do our job here and have this legislation ultimately repealed, but before we do, let us clean it up and bury it decently.

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I have carefully read the remarks made by the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton) when he started this debate on April 11, and I have listened to him carefully today. This is one of the rare occasions upon which I can agree with almost everything he said. Either he or I may think that that is a refreshing change, but it does not matter.

I want to echo some of the remarks made by the hon. member. I have spent most of my life in southwestern Saskatchewan and southeastern Alberta, which must be the middle of the dust bowl, both as a teenager and when I got older. There were countless occasions when the PFAA inspector, that person who hovered over the lives of farm people all those years, was talked about either in disgust, anger, or fear. I can recall relieving a station agent in southern Alberta during the 1949 federal election campaign, and sitting having a beer with some of the boys one evening, and the hearing the local kingpin Liberal saying that if that poll did not go Liberal they would not be able to get the dry bonus. That was just rampant all over the prairie provinces. It was used as a weapon to frighten people, and almost to terrorize them. It was not a lot of money, but to people who had been dried out, it meant a lot.

The hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain spoke about expense accounts. I recall that in my baseball playing days one of the members of the team was the local PFAA inspector. We went to a baseball tournament and played until dark. On the way home we stopped at a farm. He went in and looked at a couple of granaries, got back into his car and we proceeded home. The next day he put in a full expense account for inspecting x number of farms on behalf of PFAA. The expense account included mileage, meals, and the whole thing. He delighted in telling us how he went one time to play poker and put in an expense account to PFAA. The operation of this organization was common knowledge to the people out in the field over all those years.