

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Mazankowski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also wish to thank hon. members who have been kind enough to permit me to continue. It will take only a few minutes to finish my remarks. I merely point out that a reduction of grain in the commercial system and the terminal system only aggravates the situation. It places the responsibility on the farmers to provide more storage facilities, and affects the producer in this respect: as long as grain is in the system, it will be paid for and the cash will be distributed. Nevertheless, the reduction of 150 million bushels or 200 million bushels means that that wheat will not be purchased, and this relates to a corresponding amount of cash and that is lost to the prairie economy.

● (9:20 p.m.)

I submit that the long-awaited report of the grains group which has been studying handling and transportation problems of the grain industry should be made known before this legislation receives passage. This study is long overdue and I believe that the benefits of its recommendations should be considered. I presume that the report will attempt to suggest ways of streamlining the handling system and the shipping system, and no one can argue about that. There is some suggestion that perhaps a new inland terminal system ought to be developed. I only remind you, Mr. Speaker, that if this is to be developed, the producers will be paying the shot.

I wish to make another point. Since the industry is considered as a whole in the three prairie provinces, it seems to me it is conceivable that in one province there could be a total crop failure in any one year while in the other two provinces there might be sufficient receipts to exceed the five-year average. Thus, the farmers in the province that suffered crop failure will be deprived of any assistance. Withdrawal of PFAA will literally force those producers to buy crop insurance. That, again, will mean added costs which, as I must point out, producers can ill-afford at this time. Also, the crop insurance program is not available in all areas and this fact must also be considered.

In conclusion, I say that the concept of the grain stabilization program may be all right in theory; however, the level of stability has a great deal of bearing on this question. This whole matter must be considered in terms of the current social and economic realities of our society. Those realities have not been considered in this bill. Second, there is a danger of those who are responsible for marketing relying too much on the fact that a half-conceived insurance policy will cushion any lost sales, and thus those engaged in the marketing of these commodities may not be as aggressive as they ought to be.

Conceivably, those in our sales mechanism might adopt a laissez-faire attitude which would have a negative rather than an aggressive effect on their marketing approach. This matter ought to be considered. Without doubt there has been a great degree of complacency in this area in past years, something that producers can

Prairie Grain Stabilization Act

ill-afford at this time. It seems to me that when a country produces 5 per cent of the world supply of a commodity and carries in excess of 50 per cent of the world surplus, something is very wrong. The bill will do nothing to overcome this problem. The bill, Mr. Speaker, is a buy-off. Although farmers urgently need the \$100 million, we would be remiss in our duty if we failed to predict the consequences of this measure, consequences going beyond the payment of the \$100 million. In my opinion, passage of this bill will hasten a reduction in the number of small farms. Unless major changes are incorporated in the bill, I shall have serious reservations about supporting it.

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise to take part in this debate because about 5,500 square miles of my constituency is farm country, most of it being grain farm country. I am also rising because we are in the middle of another national tragedy, one that is being looked at mostly by the people of the three prairie provinces and not by many people in the rest of Canada. I say that in light of the kind of legislation that the Minister without Portfolio (Mr. Lang) in charge of the Wheat Board and the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) have recently brought down to cope with problems besetting agriculture generally and besetting prairie farmers particularly with respect to grain.

I say that this is a national tragedy because, since this government took office, since the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) assumed office, since the hon. member for Saskatoon-Humboldt joined the cabinet, and since the time his predecessors who were just as incompetent as he is, took charge of the Wheat Board and of the grains business of the three prairie provinces, net farm income in Canada—you must see this figure to believe it—has dropped by \$516 million.

Only the organizational genius of this kind of government could arrange that, Mr. Speaker. Canada grows a lot of grain. We raise great quantities of food products and are possessed of resources which few countries in the world possesses. Only the organizational genius of this kind of government could arrange for people involved in primary production, fishermen, grain farmers and other primary producers, to lose money.

An hon. Member: We import agricultural produce.

Mr. Benjamin: The minister in charge of the Wheat Board has presented this legislation to the House. He has threatened us with it. Let me say at once that I fully accept his sincerity. I believed him when he said, as reported at page 5603 of *Hansard* for May 7:

This leads me to say how much this emphasizes this government's real belief in the desirability of maintaining farming as a viable and effective way of life.

He went on to say:

I want to state, as a fundamental matter of our philosophy—

Meaning, the philosophy of the Liberal government.

—that we do not in any way have the view that anyone should be made to move off a farm if he chooses to live on it.