

*Western Grain Stabilization*

solving this problem is one reason why I say this bill has a very distinct connection with the Assiniboia constituency.

Another reason I say Assiniboia has a peculiar interest in these proposals was alluded to earlier today by the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom). After Mr. Douglas's untimely death in 1971, a by-election was called and fought in Assiniboia. The campaign was based largely upon the 1970-71 stabilization proposals; they played a major role in the discussions at that time. I was a little saddened at the attitude that I detected was taken by the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville, indeed by others in the House today, who seemed to express a great deal of glee, patting themselves on the back, that the 1971 proposals were not successful.

It seems to me that that is not a particularly good reason for any member of the House to rejoice, and I wonder whether their priorities are not a little twisted. If they are happy with that sort of result, then I wonder whether they are showing genuine concern for grain producers or rather are merely exhibiting political expediency. I think the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville gave himself away when he spent a great deal of time on the question of the Assiniboia by-election and the provincial election in Saskatchewan, both of which were fought that year. In both campaigns members opposite went out of their way to explain, or to mis-explain, if you like, what the stabilization idea was all about.

As you might suspect, Madam Speaker, I was not particularly elated at the result of the election in Assiniboia in 1971, but as I pointed out to the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville this afternoon, since that time we have corrected that particular problem. I was not particularly elated either when in 1971 the stabilization proposal was ultimately withdrawn. I do not say it was a perfect plan. It was not a perfect plan and no one at that time pretended it was. But it was a good beginning, a place to start.

Never before had any government in this country pioneered this particular field. They paid a lot of lip service to it and we heard much rhetoric about how nice it would be to solve the problem, but no one got around to putting a specific proposal before parliament or before farmers which they could examine in an effort to try to solve the problem.

It is interesting to note that we did not see this kind of magic solution to the stabilization issue even 15 years ago when hon. members opposite sat in this House with the biggest majority any government in this country has ever had.

Bill C-244 in 1971 ploughed a lot of new ground. Indeed it is no exaggeration to say that it laid the foundation for the new major proposals we have before us this evening in Bill C-41.

I was interested in the figures that the minister reviewed in his remarks to the House on Monday evening when he spoke on the consideration of this bill on second reading. Those figures demonstrate quite clearly the kind of value in pure dollars and cents that Bill C-41 will have for western Canadian grain producers. He demonstrated how much cash would have flowed to the pockets of western grain producers over the last ten years had this proposal been in effect during those years. It seems to me

[Mr. Goodale.]

that this kind of result in terms of dollars and cents is what we should concern ourselves about so as to ensure that the farmers of this country will not in the future have to worry about these jolting periods when their incomes fall to rock bottom as a result of problems over which they have no control at all.

In 1971 we listened to different criticisms, different depending upon where that criticism came from. We heard much criticism from members of both parties opposite, and we received some very legitimate suggestions for improving the bill from farm organizations in western Canada. But let me compare the difference in emphasis here, Madam Speaker. Why were the parties opposite criticizing? The hon. member for Yorkton-Melville spelt that out very clearly: they were criticizing for the purpose of an election in Saskatchewan and by-election in Assiniboia riding.

On the other hand, the farm groups had an entirely different emphasis. They were talking about putting in place a plan that they believed was in their best interests, one that would operate in the long term in their best interests. I do not think they wanted to see the stabilization proposal postponed for one year, two years, or five years; they wanted a plan in 1971 that they could regard as being in their best interests. They put forward proposals for changes and suggestions for improvement and that, indeed, has been the basis for the kind of work that has gone on since 1971 within the grains administration of the Government of Canada; putting this kind of suggestion for improvement in place.

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These are constructive suggestions that have come forward from farm groups and farmers in this country, and particularly western Canada, and not the kind of negative, nit-picking, partisan criticism we heard from members opposite in 1971, and again today. That kind of criticism has not contributed one iota to improving the situation in western Canada.

That story dating back to 1971 is an interesting one. It is one that I suppose has some happy times and some sad times, but it is history, and some of it may be characterized at this stage as ancient history.

But in the interests of farmers of western Canada in 1971, when he withdrew the grain stabilization bill at that time, the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board made one very firm commitment. He said he would return with it in an improved form to take account of the suggestions from farmers and farm organizations, and so tonight we come to consider Bill C-41 in principle and, later on, I hope very quickly, in committee in some detail.

I think the minister's explanation of the principle of the bill is very well set forward in his remarks of last Monday. There is no real point in going through the bill clause by clause at this stage because that is the function of the committee. There are some very interesting and important but minor points, if you like, that should make this program in its entirety very attractive to western Canadian grain producers.

First of all there is a small but important aspect, and that is that the levies that will be paid by farmers will be tax deductible as a farm expense. This is written into the