

Prairie Grain Stabilization Act

change the bill and to base the plan on net income rather than gross income. The minister knows that if that concept were accepted by the House there would be no problem in making the necessary, consequential amendments to the bill to ensure that it accomplishes the purpose for which it was designed. So what we are debating here is the principle of net farm income as opposed to gross farm income as the basis for the plan. This the minister knows, and to say anything else is a cop-out.

The concept of a plan based on net income is one of the changes for which the three prairie ministers of agriculture came to Ottawa to argue. It is the concept that the three pools, the National Farmers Union and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture wish to see incorporated in the bill. Because it is not, they continue to oppose the bill. These organizations and the three prairie governments have not wilted when confronted with the government's ultimatum that they either let the bill go through the House as it is or they get nothing. They have not knuckled under to such blackmail. They have not replied to the government's assertion—

Mr. Osler: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order. The hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Osler) on a point of order.

Mr. Osler: Mr. Speaker, I should like the hon. member to document his statement. I do not think anyone has ever heard the government say they would either have to take this bill or get nothing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. The Chair feels that the point raised by the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre is argument and a point for debate, not a point of order.

Mr. Rowland: This government has repeatedly said to the farmers of the west; "Either you accept Bill C-244 or you will get no stabilization plan".

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. McBride: Who's confused now?

Mr. Rowland: The farm organizations in the west are not going to take this kind of approach and neither are the prairie governments. They are not going to give up the fight for justice for the west because of an attempt at blackmail, and a cheap attempt at that.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Rowland: Hon. members opposite have complained about the time it has taken to get this bill through and they charge us with filibustering, mounting a blockade, and so on. Despite the agonizing by hon. members opposite, no attempt has been made to change the bill and no logical, reasoned arguments have been advanced on their part for not doing so. If this bill had been drafted by people genuinely knowledgeable about the problems of the west and genuinely concerned for the west, it would be through the House right now because the plan would have been based on net farm income rather than gross farm income.

[Mr. Rowland.]

This bill is supposed to meet the needs of the prairie farmer. The three prairie ministers of agriculture came to Ottawa—

Mr. Osler: Listen to our farmer talking.

Mr. Rowland: Mr. Speaker, it has been said that I am not a farmer, and I am confronted by the same problem as the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Osler). However, the difference between the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre and me is this: I know that I have a lot to learn about the problems of agriculture. This is why I listen to the people who know something about agriculture, such as the NFU, the CFA and the Wheat Pools.

Before I was interrupted I was saying that the agriculture ministers representing the governments of the three prairie provinces to which the provisions of the bill are supposed to apply, came to Ottawa expressly to tell the minister that unless the plan were based on net income rather than gross income it would not stabilize farm incomes, which is the intent of the bill. They came to argue, rather, that the bill would act only as insurance of doubtful adequacy in the event of a catastrophic crop failure or some other economic event of equally disastrous proportions.

Nevertheless, the minister would not even listen to them. He misled the ministers from the three prairie provinces into believing that they had reached an agreement with a gentleman, and did so in order to get them out of Ottawa. Then as soon as their backs were turned he tore the agreement up. And this government wonders why there is discontent in the west! It wonders why the government is about as popular in the west as the plague. It wonders why Ottawa is as foreign to westerners as Bangkok.

• (9:50 p.m.)

The treatment this government has accorded the western agricultural ministers supplies the answer to each of these questions. Can anyone here imagine this government treating the ministers of agriculture of Ontario and Quebec as it treated the ministers of agriculture of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta? Can anyone here imagine this government welching on an agreement with the ministers of agriculture of Ontario and Quebec? You're damned right they cannot. This government, composed almost exclusively of easterners, would be falling over itself in its attempts to do exactly what Ontario and Quebec wanted.

Look at the chicken-and-egg war. When Quebec was in obvious violation of the laws of this country, the government would not act. It was left to Manitoba to seek the court ruling which eventually resulted. As long as this government has Ontario and Quebec firmly in its pocket the rest of the country can rot as far as the government is concerned. That is why there is discontent in the west. We are sick of being ignored and insulted. We are sick of government of, by and for Ontario and Quebec.

Why did the three prairie ministers come to Ottawa to ask for a plan based on net income? Why are we on this side of the House determined to have a plan based on that concept? I suggest it is simply and solely because a stabili-