

*Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act***AFTER RECESS**

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS****PRAIRIE GRAIN ADVANCE PAYMENTS ACT****AMENDMENTS RESPECTING RATE PER BUSHEL, EMERGENCY PAYMENTS, EXTENSION OF APPLICATION TO RYE, FLAXSEED AND RAPESEED**

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Lang that Bill C-239, to amend the Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Agriculture.

**Mr. S. J. Korchinski (Mackenzie):** Mr. Speaker, when we adjourned this debate at five o'clock I had covered several areas of the legislation in order to remind the House, first that we do not object to the principle and, second, that I do not believe any of us would object to the idea that legislation should take into account contingencies such as snowed-under crops, and so on. I do not believe this legislation would be objectionable to anyone in this country, particularly since it would place farmers in a position where they would not have to come forward hat in hand asking for help, any more than the person who finding himself unemployed should have to appeal to government or anybody else for temporary assistance. I believe this type of assistance is an acceptable way of life in Canada.

What we find objectionable to some extent is the situation which might occur when a farmer is in error in estimating the type of crop he will have. A farmer may believe he will have a crop and on that basis he may take an advance. In all conscience he believes he will have a return on his crop and therefore applies for the advance, yet there are provisions which require him to pay a penalty from the day he applies for the advance.

● (8:10 p.m.)

Second, the farmer may have overestimated. In an area like mine, for example, it is not very easy to overestimate, but there are areas of southern Saskatchewan and southern Manitoba where floods occur in the spring and the whole crop may be lost. There should be provision to cover that type of situation. Farmers have to rely on the good will of the people to whom they apply, namely, the Wheat Board, who appeal to the minister and if the minister feels he should be generous then that is the order of the day. I think this should be a provision of the bill in cases where special conditions warrant it.

After all, we must accept the possibility of an emergency arising which means a crop is not harvested. To except people who have suffered loss to repay the advance when obviously the crop loss was not their fault, and they have to make a special appeal to the minister, is wrong in my opinion. I think we should go a little further and consider the fact that farmers might not be able to harvest their crops as a result of flooding in the

[Mr. Deputy Speaker.]

spring. This type of hazard generally does not occur in my area, which is a rolling area, but I do know that it happens occasionally in southern Manitoba, southern Saskatchewan and southern Alberta. It happens only once in 10, 12 or 15 years, but we should take it into account.

There are other aspects of this bill which puzzle me. First, the simple 6 per cent interest for those in default used to apply. This is no longer to be the case. Farmers are at the mercy of the cabinet, by Order in Council, and we do not know what rate of interest will be applicable. I do not think this is acceptable. I think there should be a fixed rate. The fact that the cabinet may vary the interest rate means that it has absolute control over the individual. Surely we are not yet in this position in our country.

Let us consider the expression "the Governor in Council may authorize". We find this expression objectionable. I would like to see ground rules set down and lived by. I do not want to see Governor in Council authorizations just because a Prime Minister happens to be annoyed one day, because the minister in charge happens to have a bad day with his wife or anyone else, or because a member of the opposition annoys the minister that day and he decides to zero in and fix the guy. This is the kind of provision to which Canadians in general should object. I object to it not only in this legislation but in any other piece of legislation.

Let us set down ground rules. Let us not leave it to regulations or to the Governor in Council. We have a Constitution and we want to abide by it. We want to know what the rules are. We do not want to be at the mercy of a few men who may be powerful but who are very weak in many ways. I think that this is a fair request to make of the cabinet. I do not think that any minister would want the responsibility of raising the interest rate all of a sudden, following which accusations would be made against him. We can figure out averages over the long term. Let us not equivocate. We can set down these rates. The civil service is loaded with economists. They can figure out a fair average which we can accept. We do not want to be at the mercy of a few men who may have a feud.

The bill provides for cash advances on crops. It seems to me the minister is simply using this bill in order to pass other legislation. When he says that farmers may take cash advances on rapeseed, rye and flax, all he wants to do is make other legislation more acceptable, such as the measure covering rye, flax and rapeseed under the Wheat Board Act, so that he may eventually put forward another bill—that is, the stabilization bill about which he is really concerned—because he will then have an absolute count of the number of bushels produced and sold on which farmers will pay 2 per cent. That is all the minister is interested in.

As a result of this situation we find that one bill is contingent upon another. At present all these bills are lumped together. If one fails, the others will not work. The minister shrugs his shoulders. I say to him that once farmers take cash advances on rapeseed, they are obviously committed to the Wheat Board. How does the government collect the money from the farmers? We are