

ic plan that considers farmers who remain on the land and makes sure that they are in a sound economic position. If we do not have that kind of plan we can only look for continued attribution, for continued economic and financial pressure on the farmer who is on the land, and for continued hardship and difficult conditions for him. If we had a fully active economy ready to absorb those who leave the land or who are prepared to leave the land, I suppose there would be an alternative course for farmers to take. But these are not present-day conditions and therefore we cannot look with equanimity on any program connected with grain which fails to take into account the pressure being applied to the farmer. It would, of course, be some small consolation to the farmer if he knew that if he were turfed out because of pressure on prices he could find another job. It would be some consolation but that situation does not exist. For this reason we must examine the bill very closely to see what it purports to do for the farmer. We must also take into account the economic conditions in which we live wherein we have administered prices for many of the commodities which the farmer buys.

● (8:20 p.m.)

When representatives of the government of Manitoba appeared before the committee they presented a brief which dealt at length with the increased costs of production which the farmer has to bear. Perhaps it did not receive the attention it deserved, but those of us who are farmers and make our living off the land thought it was important. In connection with my amendment I wish to draw to the attention of the House some of the statements made by representatives of the Manitoba government as to the probable effects on the farmer and what he may reasonably hope to receive from this bill in terms of stabilization of the agricultural industry and, more important, the point at which it is stabilized. It would be small comfort for a person who has an annual income of \$2,000 to be guaranteed that he will receive that amount forever. He probably would not stand up and cheer loudly.

In his statement to the Standing Committee on Agriculture, the Hon. Sam Uskiw said:

Because Bill C-244 does not have a preamble stating its objectives, we have to fall back on statements made by the hon. Otto Lang on the purposes of the stabilization plan. In the statement released by Mr. Lang on October 29, 1970, the purpose of the plan was said to be "To counteract sharp swings in farm cash receipts from grains and oilseeds" based, apparently, on the assumption that "At any level of total receipts the adequacy of cashflow will be improved by stability from year to year."

In a pamphlet entitled "Prairie Grains Policy" signed by Mr. Lang and mailed to prairie farmers the statement is made that, "we could level out the boom and bust cycles to help farmers plan their investments over a longer term."

Finally, in the statement tabled by Mr. Lang in the House of Commons on March 15, 1971, it is said that "the proposed policies would stabilize farm cash receipts from grain at 4 per cent above the average revenue from the marketplace."

From these statements it may be concluded that stabilization is sought after as an end in itself, although the claim is made that stabilization will allow the individual farmer to plan his investment over a longer term, and that the plan will achieve

24171—39

Prairie Grain Stabilization Act

stabilization "at 4 per cent above the average revenue from the marketplace".

The minister goes on to discuss stabilization and the circumstances of some groups and individuals who benefit from stabilization. There are, indeed, people in our society who benefit from stabilization and the minister mentioned some of them. He said:

For example, stability of income is the hallmark of the old age pensioners, widows, welfare recipients and many workers in the service industries. But it is not so very long ago that the Prime Minister of Canada—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I must interrupt the hon. member. I am wondering whether the speech which the hon. member is making is one which would normally be made, if it has not already been made by a number of hon. members, on second reading and which may be made later on third reading. I suggest to hon. members that we should not have a general debate on each of the 16 motions which will be coming up for debate. An effort should be made by all hon. members to limit their speeches as much as possible to the motion which is before the House.

Mr. Gleave: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I am trying to do that, although somewhat ineffectively. I think that the opinions of governments, although only one was given by a representative of the Prairie provinces, and farm organizations should be brought to the attention of the House. I am quoting from this document because the representative of the Manitoba government was the only person who made a strong case for a net income approach in any plan designed to aid the farmer, particularly the grain farmer in western Canada. I draw to Your Honour's attention the phrase in motion No. 1 which reads:

"and after the deduction of the increased costs of production, and including stabilization payments, if any;"

In other words, this amendment refers specifically to the costs of production and seeks to have those costs considered in the bill. The representative of the government of Manitoba was the only provincial government witness who appeared before the committee. That government brought forward a detailed plan of how costs of production can be brought into a plan to work for the benefit of prairie farmers. The limiting factor in this bill is that it does not take into account present or future production costs. When the minister appeared before the committee I asked him specifically if farm production costs had been taken into account when this plan was being considered. His reply was, "How do you know anything about this? Two farmers will give two different opinions as to actual costs of production."

I pointed out to the minister that in the province of Alberta a very exhaustive study was undertaken and published with regard to production costs for grain in that area. I pointed out to the minister, too, that in Saskatchewan there were farm management groups which over the years had made exhaustive studies of production costs in the province and published them regularly under the auspices of the Department of