

Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act

opinion in debate. In doing so I have expressed the feelings of my constituents in southwestern Saskatchewan about this Bill. It is one part of a program designed to enhance the position of the Canadian grain farmer in light of the unfair and disastrous competition he is facing. If the Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap (Mr. Riis) is perplexed once again this morning, I cannot do much about it because it is not the first time he has been perplexed.

Mr. Mayer: Mr. Speaker, I do not think there is a question at all here of filibustering. It is a question of the Government talking about some important legislation in the House. This Government, as the Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap (Mr. Riis) will know, has made a major commitment to Canadian agriculture. We want Members on all sides of the House to have an opportunity to participate in this very important debate. Some very useful suggestions have already been made. I, as the Minister responsible, look forward to the study of the Bill at committee where we hope to take into account some of the suggestions that are being made here this morning.

• (1200)

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, many members of the New Democratic Party, and I suspect of the Liberal Party as well, want to speak on this Bill.

Mr. McDermid: Where are they?

Mr. Riis: The Hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Trade (Mr. McDermid) asks where they are. We are quite prepared to discuss all the concerns of the farm community at some length. However, we feel that it is important to deal with this Bill expeditiously. Members can relate their concerns in Committee of the Whole. We in the Liberal and New Democratic Parties want to proceed with this Bill. I do not know why members of the Government are prolonging this debate. We still have the third reading and Committee of the Whole stages in which to examine this Bill in detail. I find this very confusing. The New Democratic Party wants to have this Bill passed expeditiously in order to put money into the hands of farmers as quickly as possible. I urge members of the Government to move expeditiously as well.

Mr. Stan Schellenberger (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, I was beginning to think the Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap (Mr. Riis) did not want to hear my speech. I have listened for many hours to members of the New Democratic Party while wondering why they spoke on and on. I suppose it was because they believed in something very strongly and had some news to tell the Canadian people. I like to talk about good news as well and there is lots of good news with regard to agriculture because the Government has made a commitment to agriculture in western Canada.

I know it was difficult for the Member to listen to the excellent speeches made by the Member for Mackenzie (Mr. Scowen) and the Member for Swift Current—Maple Creek (Mr. Wilson) outlining the many programs and initiatives which the Government has put in place over the last two years to assist agriculture. I commend the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) and the Minister responsible for the Wheat Board (Mr. Mayer) for the influence they have had on the Government and for the excellent legislation they are bringing forward to assist all Canadian farmers. This Bill is an example of that.

The Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act was introduced in the early 1960s and has been a great help to farmers. However, it is time to update and renew it. Members have already spoken eloquently on how the Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act is being updated. Grain producers in Canada have been facing very serious problems, most of which are financial. The reasons for this are well known as costs continue to escalate and prices continue to drop.

I have always found it amazing that people will produce far more than the world is capable of utilizing. Although there are people in the world who require food, our systems are not adequate to get the food to the people who require it. I am amazed that the European Economic Community is now talking about dumping food which has spoiled in storage bins while people in Africa do not have sufficient food to sustain themselves. This problem in agriculture can be traced to the international markets which are affected by the subsidies which have been previously outlined. It is due to this that the Government has taken such an active part in the international community to attempt to eliminate the approximately \$100 billion of subsidies which go to agricultural producers. That is in the interest of Canada.

We are low cost producers and low subsidizers of agricultural production. We have many natural advantages for the growing of crops. We have the best grading system in the world and a well evolved marketing system. It is, therefore, definitely to our advantage to ensure that the international community works toward eliminating these subsidies. That is why the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) was able to raise this issue so well at the Tokyo Summit. The word went out from there that the Government of Canada is interested in bringing common sense back to the world trading picture.

In Uruguay the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) was able to convince his fellow GATT signatories that the time had passed for papering over the problems and that it is now time to get down to serious discussions, to move toward action and away from talk. These efforts were successful and the GATT nations have agreed, for the first time, that agricultural trade will be a priority item on the agenda.

The amendments to this Act are part of the Government's over-all approach to agriculture. We are moving to improve existing programs while bringing forward new initiatives which will be of valued assistance to agricultural producers. This commitment was made in the Speech from the Throne and it is