

Prairie Grain Stabilization Act

even suggested there are slight weaknesses in the DBS costs of production figures. He has not even considered the method used by the government of Manitoba in arriving at these figures.

We realize that the Manitoba government is not as big as the government of Canada and not as big as this minister, but that government has taken the DBS handbook on agricultural statistics to arrive at farm net income figures. The total farm operating expenses and depreciation costs for the three prairie provinces have been tabulated by DBS. The government of Manitoba used this tabulation as a basis for arriving at costs of production figures. They do not pretend these figures are perfect; they even say that they are not perfect.

Mr. Lang: May I ask the hon. member a question?

Mr. Benjamin: By all means.

Mr. Lang: I should like to ask the hon. member whether he is aware of the fact that, apart from all the technical problems of determining what are the particular costs of production of individual farmers, the basic proposition of stabilization would not be affected whether you used a change in gross or a change in net, except if you add a significant infusion of additional cash. Does he realize that if the Manitoba scheme were implemented it might cost the producers an extra 8 per cent or 10 per cent levy on their production?

Mr. Benjamin: That might be true, if we did it the way the minister would do it. Of course it would cost the farmer more if the minister's formula were applied. When is this minister going to get the message? This is one of the few occasions in the history of agricultural debates in Parliament, going back to at least 1951, where there has been a genuine opportunity for government and opposition members to really do something about the grains income situation in western Canada.

The minister keeps applying the concepts of his predecessors. This is what we are trying to persuade him not to do. We are not particularly interested in the minister personally. We think he is a very nice fellow. But he refuses to accept the findings and figures of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, the National Farmers Union, the United Grain Growers and the three prairie wheat pools. He turns a deaf ear in that direction.

He can turn as many deaf ears as he likes toward Conservative and NDP members from the prairie provinces because that is fair ball and by-play in this House of Commons—but why does he remain insensitive and stubborn in respect of what the farmers themselves are saying? What other choice do we have but to fight him and his government, even though our respective political necks are on the line? We have never had any illusions about that, but if he thinks we are bluffing I hope what has happened today has convinced him we are not.

Let me return again to the matter of costs of production figures. The minister may well interrupt me with questions but, quite frankly, I must confess I did not know what the hell he was talking about when he interrupted me, and I am not sure he does either. When is he going to reply in this House and tell us why costs of production figures are unworkable? That is what he said on June 22.

[Mr. Benjamin.]

He said they were unworkable, but he did not say why or how.

He has not said a word to dispute the figures put forward by the government of Manitoba. He just got up and said they were unworkable. The grain farmers in the three Prairie provinces are like the man from Missouri. Better still, they are from the three Prairie provinces.

The minister has not given us a satisfactory reply and no other Liberal Member of Parliament from the Prairie provinces has been off his seat to support him. There may be some reason for the Liberal members from British Columbia, from Thunder Bay, and Kenora-Rainy River to support the hon. gentleman, but none of them has done so yet. Why have they not?

How is it that the hon. gentleman can talk about filibusters when the whole history of his announcements in October and March, during second reading and at the committee and report stages, indicate this is a travesty? This is about the fifteenth bill presented by the fifteenth cabinet minister. Obviously, the bill and the minister are both a long way down, low on the totem pole. Obviously, they do not count and the government does not care. Why does the Liberal government need a corporal's guard of Liberal Members of Parliament from the prairie provinces when it knows they are not going to get anywhere?

Mr. Orlikow: They are not going to be re-elected.

Mr. Benjamin: The government does not need them and, I agree, they are not going to be re-elected. Where are the Liberal friends of the farmers other than the hon. member for Saskatoon-Humboldt? Where is the support, either visual or oral, on the part of the government for this minister? The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) has made some noise once or twice, but I think the last time was about three months ago and we have not seen him since. He does not want to be caught in association with the minister on this bill.

The Minister of Agriculture is worried about things in Medicine Hat. If he thinks the uprising between the Crowfoot Indians and the Mounted Police back in the 1800s was something big, he has seen nothing yet. There is a very good reason for the Minister of Agriculture not backing up the hon. member for Saskatoon-Humboldt on this bill. I believe this minister has made a genuine effort to persuade his colleagues in the cabinet and in the caucus to do something about this legislation, without success. I ask the hon. gentleman to try again.

When he appears at the cabinet meeting if there is one tomorrow, or at the first opportunity, he should renew his request for support of a two-price system. It is time to renew that request. He should also renew his request for something more than this stabilization bill. In that way he could prove the concern about which he speaks. I believe him when he says he will not take a back seat to any member of this House in respect of his concern for the grain growers of the prairie provinces. Let him state to his cabinet colleagues and his colleagues in the caucus that if they are not prepared to go along with his suggestions, they should get themselves another boy because he does not intend to be a political sacrificial lamb for the Members of Parliament from other parts of Canada who belong to the Liberal party but could not care less about