

consideration of this measure and that the government, which has the power of life and death over committees, committees which are not merely its creatures but its tools, should give the agriculture committee authority to travel through Western Canada and hold open hearings.

An hon. Member: Another jaunt.

Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain): It is particularly important that this process be carried out at a time when those directly concerned by the legislation are able to participate. It would be foolish to send the committee out to hold hearings while farmers are too busy earning a living to appear before it to make representations. Before this bill becomes law it is essential to seek the advice of Canadians who make their living growing grain.

Mr. Whelan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure the hon. member and the House that there are still Canadians who have confidence in the Minister of Agriculture. This letter comes from Picture Butte, Alberta. I should like to read just one sentence:

I should like to thank you again for the help you have given to the industry. It is more than any previous Minister of Agriculture has achieved.

Need I say more, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. McKinnon: Would the minister table that letter so that the rest of us might benefit from reading it?

Mr. Whelan: Following the usual procedure, I can only table it with the consent of the writer.

An hon. Member: Your brother will agree.

Mr. Ralph E. Goodale (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased and proud to be able to say a few words this evening in the debate on Bill C-41. It is a bill of great significance, and I believe this debate will prove to be an historic one not only for this House but for the part of Canada which most of the speakers who have participated represent, that is, Western Canada.

I am interested in the peculiar debate which has been taking place as to the importance of this legislation. The hon. member for Rocky Mountain (Mr. Clark), I am glad to note, has finally concluded that it is a very important piece of legislation for Western Canada. Earlier this afternoon I listened to the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski). He began by pointing out some of the difficult situations existing in the grain industry. The years 1969 and 1970 were a time of crisis in the industry, and it was that very crisis that prompted the original proposal. The hon. member spoke of Bill C-244 and referred to the strenuous debates we had on that bill. There seemed to be approval in principle but a great deal of discussion about the precise details of the original stabilization proposal.

● (2100)

It seemed to me that the hon. member was saying that the whole idea was an important one, but he questioned whether or not it was now appropriate to deal with it by this legislation. He said we should deal with a good many other things, and he referred to transportation and labour problems. I agree that they are serious and deserve the

Western Grain Stabilization

attention of the House, but I suspect, Madam Speaker, that western farmers will be very interested in this debate and anxious to see it proceed.

Continuing in the same vein, I listened with interest to the hon. member for Lisgar (Mr. Murta). He said it was crucial to travel with the agriculture committee to provide farmers and organizations with information about the bill and to receive their representations. I should like to discuss this aspect a bit further. It seems to me that in making the proposal the hon. member is saying that the whole idea is a very important one and that the farmers should be given an opportunity to discuss it. On the other hand, the hon. member questioned whether this legislation is really important, something that we should write home about", so to speak.

Thus I am a little confused whether or not hon. members opposite think the legislation is important or not. I am happy for the odd unequivocal statement of the kind we heard from the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Hnatyshyn), and the hon. member for Rocky Mountain, who said specifically that it was very important and that they were glad to see this kind of provision once again before the House of Commons.

This bill, or I suppose more particularly its predecessor, has a rather special association with the Assiniboia constituency. A grain stabilization plan for western farm incomes and for the general economy of the west was first proposed in specific terms by the present wheat board minister in October of 1970 in a document entitled "Proposals for a Production and Grain Receipts Policy for the Western Grains Industry" dated October 29, 1970. At that time the minister discussed a whole variety of problems in the grains industry and proposed solutions to those problems, ways to attack them.

One of the proposals that was made was the western grain stabilization idea. That concept developed not easily but was the product of a lot of work in many quarters, both inside the House and in the Government of Canada, as well as among farmers and farm organizations. All of this work was directed toward attacking that age old problem in western agriculture, which I am sure is also common to members in this House who represent constituencies outside of western Canada that have a rural background. I refer to the problem of the recurrent, jolting bust years that come time and time again. Farmers are never able to enjoy the good years, the good years when they are at their peak, for fear of how low the next valley will be.

This is the problem that the grain stabilization concept was directed to four or five years ago when it was first suggested, and it is the same problem that we are trying to attack today. Many farmers and farm organizations contributed to the development of this concept at the beginning.

In connection with that landmark proposal that originally came before the House five years ago, it would be particularly appropriate this evening to acknowledge the concern, hard work and tireless effort of a previous government member for Assiniboia in this House. I refer, of course, to a most distinguished Canadian and member of parliament, the late A. B. Douglas of Weyburn, who represented Assiniboia from 1968 until 1971. His dedication to