

Advance Payments for Crops

attention to the fact that producer organizations, and consequently the individual producer himself, must expect to pay for the administration of this program. However, it should be possible to come to an agreement similar to the western agreement, making it possible for the producer organizations to get part of the administration expenses back.

My last words are for those who spoke before me; I want to thank them for their positive attitude towards this bill, which without any doubt will serve all Canadian agricultural producers. Western wheat, oats and barley producers have been given these advance payments for 20 years now. For 20 years now other Canadian producers have wanted to take part in similar programs.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to answer the hon. member for Wetaskiwin (Mr. Schellenberger). He mentioned that the minister had seldom sought advice on that bill. Mr. Speaker, if indeed there is a government minister who seeks advice, it is the Minister of Agriculture. Two, three or four times each week he meets producer organizations. This week, for example, he did not attend our sittings because he met seven different producer organizations for western Canada. This shows how much the Minister of Agriculture is interested in meeting farmers where they are, that is at home or out in the field.

Therefore, when the hon. member claims that the minister has not had enough consultations, I think he is not being fair because, quite the contrary, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) consults a great many people. Another thing I would like to add on this point, Mr. Speaker, is to point out that it is impossible to consult everyone for the simple reason that there are organizations which speak on behalf of groups of people. For instance, the Quebec Federation of Agriculture has openly endorsed this bill; this federation groups several producer associations and none has raised objections to the principle of the bill. That is why the minister did not see fit to have them come up to the department for consultation, since they were in agreement with the principle of the bill right from the beginning.

On other occasions when the Minister of Agriculture introduced other bills in the House, he never failed to consult the organization or associations of producers or farmers concerned by the bill being introduced in this House.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, there is the fact—as the last speaker mentioned—that many farmers in Canada have managed well without belonging to an agricultural organization. They have succeeded without having to organize. Mr. Speaker, I say to these farmers: Well done! But I think it is ever more difficult for a farmer to manage without the help of an organization to protect his interests because it is a well known fact that competition is fierce in many areas of agriculture. It takes only a little opening in our borders to affect an entire production or an entire farming sector and without organizations to bring pressure to bear upon the government to take remedial measures, the farmer has a very hard time managing his farm.

That is why I think the minister is right when he urges Canadian producers to organize, to get together and set up

[Mr. Pelletier.]

marketing boards. I think that if we could define the minister's personal philosophy, we could say that since his appointment, the current agriculture minister has tried to see to it that farmers are no longer the underprivileged of our society and are considered in the same way as other agencies, associations and organizations, able to claim their rights. It is with this in mind that the minister has always asked the producer organizations to get together and defend their rights. I know something about these farming areas, I am thinking for example of New Brunswick where I come from, the potato area. The hon. member for Carleton-Charlotte (Mr. McCain) knows what I am referring to and if this sector has been in trouble for many years, it is simply because of the lack of organization, of a potato marketing board.

Some years are tremendous, but sometimes the price is so low that some farmers must abandon their farms; I know it is so; I knew many farmers, many potato producers in the 50's and 60's who had to give up their farm for lack of organization.

These are my answers to certain arguments presented in the House. Again, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the minister I would like to thank hon. members who took part in this debate for the positive way they did so.

[English]

Mr. Fred McCain (Carleton-Charlotte): Mr. Speaker, I know that a commitment has been made and I will not abuse it. I wish to speak not much more than two or three minutes. I suggest that the hon. member who just spoke should speak in support of this legislation in that area to which he just referred. He ought to speak about the requirements for organization in New Brunswick and elsewhere. Such organization is needed in the worst way.

I agree with virtually everything he said about this legislation, but for one thing. I believe the hon. member for Wetaskiwin (Mr. Schellenberger) the hon. member for Elgin (Mr. Wise), and the hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin) touched on this point. Those hon. members represent widely separated geographic areas, but all were agreed in saying that this bill discriminates. It says to those who are not organized, "If you wish to take advantage of this legislation, you must organize." If the Department of Agriculture thinks that the amendment before the House will cause difficulty in administration, perhaps the minister, by virtue of the power to delegate which is vested in him, can say to provincial ministers, "Well, you can administer this provision for us in cases involving certain unorganized agricultural entities."

During discussion of this bill there was great doubt as to which entities can be considered as organized. Actually as things now stand it is questionable if the Prince Edward Island marketing board for potatoes, in its present form, could be considered an eligible organization. This bill, therefore, casts doubts on virtually every organization in the Atlantic area. There is doubt as to whether they would have authority to administer and guarantee loans.