

Prairie Grain Stabilization Act

are hearing about this bill appear to be the order of the day.

The credibility gap widens from day to day as the government talks about the equitable distribution of wealth and hon. members opposite talk in terms of gross income without any consideration for the things that really matter, net income and the cost of production. No wonder we object to the passage of the bill before us without amendment or without its being divided into two parts so that there will be ample time for full discussion later.

The government are now recognized as being the hangmen of the Prairies. They are regarded throughout the Prairies as exactly that. From the travelling I have done this summer in Saskatchewan and Alberta there is no doubt that the carrot the government is holding before the Prairie people will not be accepted. They want more than that, and they want it immediately or there will be some changes.

I wonder whether the government is aware that last year, in one small municipality, 61 notices for tax enforcement were published. Do members opposite believe that this reflects a satisfactory situation, that it represents the normal process of operations, or do they realize that the only way in which this situation can be sensibly met is to look at costs of production on a net income basis? If they were to do this I am sure their proposals would receive more consideration in the House of Commons.

We have tried to move the government into showing some concern. We sought to do this last Thursday until 2.30 Friday morning. We thought that the government, and in particular the minister who represents Saskatoon-Humboldt (Mr. Lang) in this House, would recognize the need for providing ample opportunity for discussion and the so-called dialogue about which we hear so much between Parliament and those engaged in the agricultural process. The whole situation is ironic. A consideration of the various arrangements which have been put before us makes one wonder whether the minister is really concerned about the economic plight in which the western economy finds itself.

• (5:00 p.m.)

The members of this party know that the protection offered farm income in this bill is inadequate unless we use net income as a base and not gross income. This is exactly what the amendments before the House are designed to do, and if they were adopted something could be done about the costs of production.

I suggest to the House that if the minister from Saskatoon-Humboldt would stand in his place and agree to divide the bill, the \$100 million could be paid out immediately. The facts of the situation are well known throughout the country. These acreage payments would be paid out and we could then have further discussion of the government's stabilization plan. I am sure no problems would arise and we would be well satisfied that something was being done to assist our agricultural producers. However, we know that probably this will not be the case. I thought that during the question period the minister was going to rise on a question of privilege and say that he was quite prepared to pay out that money, but such was not the case.

[Mr. Skoberg.]

I am reminded of what the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) said not too long ago during an interview with Peter Thomson and Fraser Kelly, then with the *Toronto Telegram*. Incidentally, I am sincerely disappointed to hear that the *Toronto Telegram* has probably sold its subscription list for \$10 million but was not concerned about its employees. The Prime Minister said:

Perhaps, to be quite candid with you, when you talk of growing disenchantment I must begin by saying that some of my reading of the west is that it is always disenchanting.

In the years when wheat is good and selling most of it is disenchanting; if there is too much sun it is disenchanting; if there is too much rain it is disenchanting.

I wonder whether the minister from Saskatoon-Humboldt or the "prairie twins", from the west are not so much concerned with the plight of the western economy as with another matter on which a question was asked by the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Gleave), namely, that they thought if the prairie provinces were prepared to make some changes there is no doubt the government would do something about the situation.

Mr. Lang: Might I raise a point of order, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. minister is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Lang: May I suggest, with respect to Your Honour, that again the hon. member is showing an inclination to speak generally about the problem, repeating a speech that has been made so many times in this House by himself and other members. The House is dealing with two very specific amendments, and in order to attempt to expedite the business before the House it would be useful if he were to address himself to those amendments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair appreciates that there are two specific amendments before the House, but it does seem to me that the first amendment in particular is rather broad. However, I would associate myself with the minister in saying that perhaps the hon. member could be a little more precise in his remarks.

Mr. Skoberg: Mr. Speaker, I thought I would follow up my remarks on cost of production with the response that we received from the other side of the House to questions about the agricultural economy. I could also use the analogy of last Thursday, when the minister never got around to the subject of whether or not he was breaking the law but instead talked about the stabilization plan.

Mr. Lang: That was a pretty general motion.

Mr. Skoberg: When we talk of increased cost of operation I think we must look at the total picture in Canada. Government spokesmen tell us what is going to be done as far as the prairie economy is concerned, and then we are told that if the provinces themselves are prepared to do more perhaps the federal government will do the same. Although I do not object to this, in the province of Quebec there is an acceleration plan under which the government tries to create additional job opportunities. We on this side of the House are also trying to preserve job opportunities and assist the agricultural economy of the west. Eliminating these opportunities naturally increases rural problems.