

members of the House because of the peculiar nature of the matter discussed in this bill.

● (1550)

This bill bears on the age-old dream of all farmers who know that they are in an occupation subject to many ups and downs. Some of those ups and downs are due to weather. Governments have tried to help farmers meet that type of up and down with crop insurance legislation. In the three provinces mainly affected by this bill, that is, the prairie provinces, I would assume that two-thirds of the farmers pay into the crop insurance program in order to try to protect themselves against the vagaries of weather. The farmer, therefore, has a good attitude toward paying for his own protection against variables in his income.

The minister responsible for the Wheat Board introduced Bill C-41 in order to try to carry this insurance principle a little further. This time it is insurance against the ups and downs of income. As he said in introducing the bill, sometimes farmer cannot meet the obligations contracted in the previous expenditure year because of lack of sales volume or a general lowering of world prices.

To return to the amendment, Madam Speaker, it asks this House not to decide now on the principles in this bill but to refer the subject matter to the Standing Committee on Agriculture. I think members of that committee, both from the government and the opposition, who have already spoken are in agreement that before we make up our minds on those principles as well as the subject of the matter of the bill, we want to hear from the farmers. It could rightfully be said, as the minister has already said, that the bill has been delayed month after month so he could consult the farmers. I will take his word for it—that he has consulted the farm organizations. I have seen the farm organizations' briefs and it is clear that they are just as dubious about this legislation as I am and as are many members who have spoken on the bill. There is, therefore, a good argument that on the basis of understanding the gobbledygook in this legislation it would be well to go back to the farmers to see if they understand it and want it.

Like many hon. members from the west, I have been discussing this legislation with farmers. They know that for many years I have advocated that in addition to insurance against crop damage from weather we should have some form of income stabilization. In Bill C-41, the minister has repeated the same colossal error that he committed in the infamous LIFT program—Lower Inventory For Tomorrow. He consulted every farm organization on that bill, and every farm organization of substance on the prairies—farm unions, wheat pools, the Federation of Agriculture—recommended to him in writing that he should go forward with it. Evidence of this can be found in *Hansard* of that time. The member who represented Swift Current-Maple Creek from 1968 to 1972 asked the minister, in the House, who recommended the program and at that time the minister put on record the names of all who had written.

These farm organizations recommended, in effect that the farmer be paid money out of the national treasury for re-summerfallowing and not producing wheat or going in

Western Grain Stabilization

for grass. The minister announced the policy on February 14, 1970, and embarked upon a series of meetings throughout western Canada. He told farmers that the government wanted them to get out of wheat production because there was no market for it.

I followed the minister around in those days. I was not a member of parliament at the time. I told farmers not to listen to that nitwit: that is a kindly word used in western Canada to describe a person who knows a great deal but who really knows nothing about this subject, Madam Speaker. I told them that there was no surplus, had not been a surplus and would not be a surplus. At farm meetings, with 500 or 600 people present, I asked how many wanted the LIFT program, and at every meeting over 90 per cent indicated that they did not want it.

Farmers either had to accept the LIFT program or lose their right to sell grain so I asked how many were going into it because they had to. Eighty-five per cent of the people I surveyed indicated that they had to do what the government told them in order to get their \$6 an acre to re-summer fallow. This LIFT program turned out to be the most colossal mistake ever made by a government in the history of agriculture in Canada.

Those of us who knew the world situation, who knew the increasing demands for food around the world, who knew the complete error of the statistics provided by Statistics Canada and the statistics supplied to the United States government, knew that the Statistics were wrong. But the minister of the day, the same man who holds the portfolio at present, and the government of the day, the same government that sits there now, accepted the erroneous figures because they came from a computer using a formula. Farmers were taken out of production by force even though news was coming in from all over the world that people needed our grain. The LIFT program was an immoral act, Madam Speaker, and I warn the government not to repeat that mistake.

When you consult farmers, you talk to them and not to farm organizations. They can funnel the advice up from the farmers, of course, but the only way that members of parliament can be absolutely sure of the facts is to come face to face with the grain farmers of Weyburn, the grain farmers of Alberta, the grain farmers of Brandon and ask whether they like the program. I should like to see the Standing Committee on Agriculture go into the cattle feeding areas, into my constituency, northwestern Saskatchewan, to talk to the men who feed the grain to cattle, to see what they think about being cut out of this bill. I do not want to see repeated the infamous error that was made in the 1970 LIFT program.

I do not know what it will take to convince the government that we are trying to arrive at a conclusion to benefit farmers in all parts of the country. The LIFT program is a classic example of how ignorant of farm matters the government has been in the last 25 years. This government must know that. Now, that does not mean that this was the only time that parliament was ignorant. In this House, in 1932, when the crop was failing and the price was low, this parliament was moved to compassion. The prime minister of the day, Mr. Bennett, was so impressed with the tales of the wind and the drought that he asked parliament in all conscience to vote five cents a bushel subsidy