

*Private Members' Business*

will support this motion, to show their commitment to fairness in agriculture.

As we all know, the government has introduced what it calls a discussion paper on the future of agriculture, while it is cutting program after program. It has drastically altered crop insurance, changed the At and East Program and eliminated the interest free provisions in the advance payments programs, and others, while the Minister of Agriculture says it is difficult for farmers to make long-term plans. Perhaps the minister could better spend his time defending farmers and agriculture from a finance minister who has no idea of the programs he is cutting.

The current stabilization act is not fair. This motion from the hon. member for Mackenzie requests that the government consider changes. Rather than take something away from producers, the government should make an improvement to it.

Everyone involved, producers and farm organizations, are more than willing to sit down and make some positive suggestions. In a spirit of good will and in support of our farmers, I hope the government and all the members of this House vote in support of this motion.

Too often, perhaps, agriculture is overlooked as a priority in Canada. This motion goes some way to improving the lot of our farmers and making the Western Grain Stabilization Act more fair.

I will be supporting the motion.

• (1720)

**Mr. Rob Nicholson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to say a few words on the issue of including farm-fed grain in the Western Grain Stabilization Program and the Agricultural Stabilization Program.

As my colleagues have pointed out in the course of this debate, the issue of farm-fed grain cannot be considered in isolation from other agricultural policies.

Adding farm-fed grain to these stabilization programs seems like the easiest way to acknowledge the contribution which farm-fed grain makes to our agricultural economy. But changing the Western Grain Stabilization Act and the Agricultural Stabilization Act to include

farm-fed grain would create a new set of inequities, so we must discuss the issue of farm-fed grain in the over-all context of farm safety net programs.

Right now the federal government is undertaking an extensive review of all agricultural policies and programs. This is certainly one that I welcome. Quite apart from the subject of grain which we are discussing, I know it will be of considerable interest to the fruit farmers of my area.

This government recognizes the urgent need for a safety net program for all farmers, so the Minister of Agriculture has asked, among others, the National Grains Bureau to establish a committee on grain safety nets. The committee includes representatives of both industry and the provinces.

The issue of how farm-fed grain is included in grain safety net programs is likely to be discussed as part of the committee's work.

The agricultural policy review is one of the most comprehensive ever undertaken. It began with the release of the discussion paper *Growing Together* to which the last speaker alluded. The paper outlines the major principles for building agricultural programs and policies to meet the challenges of the future. Those principles are market responsiveness, self-reliance, regional sensitivity and environmental sustainability.

Market responsiveness means aggressively going after markets both at home and abroad. It means concentrating on producing what the market wants and needs.

Self-reliance means getting reasonable returns from the market-place. We will continue to play an important role in supporting that sector and in ensuring that that takes place, but the policies and programs which we have in place should not at the same time distort market signals.

Regional sensitivity means putting programs in place which will reflect regional strengths and advantages, but at the same time these programs should take regional diversity and aspirations into account.

Finally, environmental sustainability means preserving the soil and water resources for future generations. It also means ensuring a wholesome, safe and nutritious food supply. That is in everyone's best interest.