

Prairie Grain Stabilization Act

believe could be made to this bill. They all relate to the net income position. I suggest that the minister seriously consider these points. If he were to do so, I do not think we should hesitate to pass the bill quickly.

We have heard comments from backbenchers on the other side about our opposing this bill. I would ask some of them, including the hon. member for Winnipeg South (Mr. Osler): Why should the farmers of Alberta grow wheat at below cost of production to feed the people of Calgary? Why should the people of Manitoba grow wheat at below cost of production to feed the people of Winnipeg?

I ask the minister why he has not included in this bill provision for a two-price system. This would take into account the rise in the cost of production and would have relevancy to the cost-price position in Canada. This is a contention we have been making all along, but the minister has not yet told us why he could not include such a provision.

It is a reasonable conclusion that people should get a decent price for a product they grow and the service they have to sell. Members of this House received a 50 per cent increase in their salaries, yet farmers are asked to produce wheat at below cost. What kind of nonsense is this? I do not understand why he cannot include in the bill an amendment to cover this point.

The minister admitted to me when the bill was in committee that if the plan were to work properly a form of crop insurance would be necessary. The PFAA had not only some income value but some crop insurance value. The plan before us deals only with income. If it contained crop insurance features as well, I think we would be more ready to approve it than is the case.

These are two points. Another point is that there has to be a drop in income in the prairie region before any payment can be made under the plan. I ask those who have factories in their areas what they would think if the government said, "All the factories in your area must be shut down before anyone can receive unemployment insurance." Yet this is what the present bill implies. Again, I ask: What kind of nonsense is this?

Possibly the scheme could be dealt with on a regional basis to a far greater extent than is proposed. Let me give the House an illustration. I have rapeseed growers in my area. Some of the land is especially good for producing rapeseed and last year a number of rapeseed growers harvested a crop valued at \$100 an acre. If a payment had been made under proposed legislation they would have received money in addition to the \$100 an acre. I suggest that should not be the situation. On the other hand, farmers who suffer a complete crop failure may be unable to receive any benefit. For example, this year farmers in certain rapeseed growing areas lost their entire crops to worms. If the general picture throughout the area had been reasonably good, these farmers would not have received a single cent on the basis of the minister's proposals.

These are the sort of objections we are making to the plan which has been put forward. They are practical points which should be looked into. Apparently the minister has not paused even to consider them; he is not listening. I am not talking in the abstract; I am talking about

farmers who have suffered from the effects of maladministration by this government. I have suggested that the minister look at some of these problems, but I do not think he has done so.

• (9:40 p.m.)

May I make one more point before sitting down. If I were a farmer operating in the red, not making any money, the plan that the minister envisages could cost me another \$300, increasing my deficit by that amount. I have no guarantee that I would get five cents under this plan. I would ask the hon. member for Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton (Mr. McBride) whether he has returned to his constituency and explained this plan to his farmers. If he did that I think he would look at the plan in a completely different light.

If some of the points I have made were taken into account and the plan amended, it would have an enthusiastic reception on this side of the House. We would shake the minister's hand and congratulate him on his good sense and political good will in solving the problems that are plaguing the prairie farmers.

Mr. Doug Rowland (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, it has been said on a number of occasions this evening that the basic concept of the bill is one with which members on this side of the House agree, namely, the stabilization of the incomes of western farmers. It is the details of the plan and the way the plan is implemented by this bill with which we quarrel, and I think we have legitimate reasons for doing so.

In case it has missed the attention of hon. members opposite, one of the purposes of the amendment standing in the name of the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Gleave) is to have the stabilization payments for which the bill makes provision related to net farm income rather than gross farm income. For this reason the amendment provides that increased costs of production be deducted from the purchase price received for grain in order to arrive at a figure for grain sale proceeds.

The subamendment submitted by the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) clarifies this amendment by providing as a base year for the purpose of calculating increased production the crop year ending July 31, 1970. This was a necessary clarification. As the minister has said, the original amendment was probably less precise than it needed to be in order to accomplish the intended purpose, and that is why the hon. member for Skeena submitted his subamendment.

Having said that, in his remarks this afternoon the minister suggested that the subamendment as presented would result, because of the way the concept of grain sale proceeds is employed in clauses 4 and 5 of the bill, in the possible reduction of payments to some individual farmers. That may be the case. He concluded, and rightly, that such was not the purpose of the subamendment. He then said for that reason the subamendment confused matters and was therefore not worthy of support.

I submit that this kind of reasoning, coming from the minister in a debate like this where it is perfectly clear that what we on this side of the House are arguing is for a plan based on net income, is simply a cop-out. The minister knows that the purpose of this amendment is to