

*Government Orders*

I would like to ask him whether in his view this kind of an enabling legislative approach, which outlines certain principles and objectives that bring the provinces into the fold and bring the producers into the fold, may very well constitute a more effective policy measure than simply trying to design a program after the fact, as we have been forced to do, because the existing stabilization and safety net programs were not adequate enough to cover the very severe losses that were incurred.

Does he not agree that this approach would cover all bases in a more effective manner?

**Mr. Harvard:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Minister of Agriculture for his question.

I think all of us on both sides of the House, and certainly those out in the farming community, were fed up with what is called ad hocery. The system that we had, where we sort of react to crises, react to the latest events, just did not work, and mainly because farmers never knew where in the world they stood. They did not know how the government of the day, be it Conservative, be it Liberal, might respond.

As I said in my speech earlier, the element of predictability is a very positive one, and this in my opinion is a step toward predictability. I want the farmers to get some better sense of where they stand. When they go out to the land in the spring, they should have some idea of what is in place, what they can expect in the way of a monetary return when they have worked hard all spring, all summer and through the fall.

Yes, I agree with the hon. Minister of Agriculture. I want a framework like this, but at the same time I am concerned that we as parliamentarians or this House are being somewhat side-stepped.

We have seen examples of so-called executive federalism in the last few years. Sometimes it works; sometimes it does not work very well. As one parliamentarian, a backbencher on the opposite side, I am a little concerned when I see ministers of the federal Crown and premiers or ministers of the provincial legislatures getting together and doing their thing as if the House of Commons was not important at all.

But, yes, if the minister were also suggesting wide consultation, I am all in favour of that and I am very glad

that farmers in the last number of months have had an opportunity to say their piece. When I look at this bill, I can see farmer written into it, without a doubt, and that I appreciate.

**Mr. Mazankowski:** Mr. Speaker, not to prolong the debate, but I find it very intriguing. I share his view. I am as much a House of Commons man as the hon. member. I appreciate the significance of the institution and the importance of it.

What we have tried to do here is seek a balance. If we have a legislative measure that has rigidity built into it, as we have had, it is very difficult for any government to respond to these kinds of circumstances. What we have been trying to do in the process of the enabling legislation is to build in certain principles and establish flexibility, so that we can respond in a way that provides some predictable nature in the programs we are establishing. I guess it is that balance we have tried to achieve.

The opposite to that is legislative framework that is far too rigid and that does not give the flexibility to respond to these kinds of things.

I am glad that the hon. member did make the point that producers had been involved. What I find very fascinating and intriguing about this whole process is that I firmly believe—and it may very well set the stage for a new era of public policy making—that while this might take a little longer and our patience has to be a little more controlled, in the final analysis we can get a better piece of legislation and hopefully a better program with the broad based consultation we have tried to engage in.

**Mr. Harvard:** Mr. Speaker, again I thank the hon. Minister of Agriculture for his comments.

Let me just make two points. I am hoping that through this process in the House we can improve the bill. When it goes to committee, I would hope that the minister and the government would entertain some amendments. We humbly suggest that it can be improved in some areas.

Another thing I want to point out is that the hon. minister talks about balance. I want to see balance as well. I want to see a balance that is fair to the federal government, a balance that is fair to the provinces, and a balance that is fair to producers, but I am not absolutely sure whether the balance we all want has been arrived at.