

Prairie Grain Stabilization Act

that, initially only, special emphasis will be given to grain and oil seeds. This program may not be continued.

Here is another of the proposals made on October 29:

That the Canadian government continue its policy of supporting credit sales of wheat, but that the costs, if any, of providing the buyer with medium term credit at interest rates below commercial rates be assumed as a cost by the pool.

This is another cost to the farmer, and another example of allowing the salesman to make the sale, then have the farmer pick up the tab. For far too long, the farmer has been picking up the tab. A former minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board said a few years ago that he did not have a thing to do with the Wheat Board, that the Wheat Board sold the grain. This minister is putting himself in a position where the Wheat Board will not be able to make a move without asking him how they are to sell grain and what interest rates they are to set. In the end, it will be the farmer who will pick up the tab.

Surely, the Canadian government should be creating a situation in which more flexibility could be given to the Wheat Board so that it could serve the farmer better, rather than the government. This series of bills is geared to creating a situation where the Wheat Board serves the government and the government is responsible to the farmer. Should we not put more emphasis on bringing in legislation that would make the Wheat Board directly responsible to the farmer? There would be less chance of sympathetic and slick politicians hoodwinking the voters at election time.

At the Liberal party policy meeting in March of this year the question of the Canadian Wheat Board was discussed. There was agreement that the Canadian Wheat Board should be retained but made more flexible. That is the point I am attempting to make now, but how is it being made more flexible? Today, a farmer has to be a Philadelphia lawyer to figure out what the quota should be, what he should sell and what he should grow. The old system moved grain because of the assistance of Operation Lift, but I do not want to get into that because everybody across Canada knows that Operation Lift was an utter failure. As someone said in the House the other day, a farmer told him that if he had one more Lift he would be out of business. That explains Operation Lift very well. What does the program do? This whole series of bills creates a situation in which the farmer is placed in a straitjacket.

• (4:40 p.m.)

He must be a producer of barley, wheat or oats with little opportunity of becoming the producer of any other commodity. Some may say that this is all to the good, because then the government will know exactly what is happening in the field. Well, the government attempted to tell the farmer what he should do last spring when it introduced Operation Lift. Then, this fall, we found ourselves short of barley and were prepared to sell barley at between 10 cents and 15 cents a bushel less than we ought to have sold it. Why, Mr. Speaker? Apparently the all-knowing eye, and I mean the Minister without Portfolio in charge of the Wheat Board (Mr. Lang)

[Mr. Horner.]

did not know the answers. He was not superior to anybody else in knowledge and did not know about the corn-blight in the United States. Last spring he advised our farmers not to grow barley, and this spring he advised them to grow barley. Mr. Speaker, I should like to hear the minister taking objection to some of the statements I am making. I suggest that he advised farmers not to grow barley. I submit that before May 1 they were advised not to grow barley, and perhaps in June they will be advised that they can grow barley.

Mr. Lang: The hon. member does not know what he is talking about.

Mr. Horner: The minister suggests that I do not know what I am talking about. I think I know a great deal more about agriculture than the minister knows, and I care a great deal more about agriculture than the minister does. To give you some idea of how much he cares, may I read a report from the *Free Press Weekly* dated May 1, 1971. It reads, in part:

Canadian Wheat Board Minister Otto Lang put his head on the chopping block of prairie farm opinion last week by introducing a Commons amendment that could give the board marketing control of flax, rye and rapeseed.

That gives you some idea of what the minister knows. He does exactly as he is told to do and is following policies laid out in the Winnipeg speech. If he does not do as he is told he will have to go the way the hon. member for Duvernay (Mr. Kierans) and the hon. member for Trinity (Mr. Hellyer) went. Since his old job at the University of Saskatchewan may not be open, he would rather stay here.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Horner: Let me make one point which may or may not have been made with regard to the stabilization program. The PFAA program helped farmers, although not as much as had been hoped. In situations where drought or other hazards had brought farmers economic losses, the program worked almost on an individual basis. It was not quite as efficient on an individual basis as crop insurance, but it was almost as efficient. Under the program being discussed, we are considering the five-year average of income obtained from six major crops. If a farmer's income is 90 per cent or more of that average, no payment is made. On the other hand, if there is a drought in the Peace River area, or in southern Manitoba or along the Red River Valley and farmers lose their crops there, or if there is a drought or a crop failure in southern Saskatchewan, and these conditions do not prevail throughout the rest of the country which may enjoy a good crop, there will be no compensation at all under the stabilization program.

Mr. Lang: Has the hon. member not heard of crop insurance?

Mr. Horner: The minister asks if I have heard of crop insurance? Why, I helped to have that legislation passed