

various regions. The minister was reported in the *Toronto Globe and Mail* of September 9, 1974, as saying that the federal government was studying proposed changes to its grain stabilization plan that would fix incomes on a more regional basis. That statement was attributed to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lang) who is responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board.

Under the legislation as it now stands, payment to producers will take place only if the totality of the prairie provinces suffers from severe crop damage or depressed markets. The lumping of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and the designated areas of British Columbia prevents an individual producer or a localized region within a province from obtaining compensation if crop damage occurs.

The minister has responded to this criticism by saying that the plan is not a form of insurance but is a stabilization program. It was reported in the *Globe and Mail* of December 7, 1974, that the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board said at a press conference that he would propose continued study to see whether more regionalization could be put into the program. He added that too much regionalization, however, would make the plan little more than normal crop insurance. The minister said the plan was not a crop insurance scheme but was meant very much to complement existing insurance schemes.

Because this aspect of the bill is of great importance, the minister should confirm in the House if his proposal for a study into regionalization of the legislation has been initiated and, if so, when this study will be tabled, or possibly presented to the committee. Department officials have stated that serious and frequent meetings took place among producer groups, bureaucrats and government officials before the final drafting of the bill was completed. Also, localization of the stabilization program, was I understand, a contentious issue in 1970, judging from my observations out west and in the House. It seems that the minister is responding somewhat late at this point in time. After the bill was given first reading, the proposal was then announced by the Minister. I should like the minister to tell the House what has transpired and when we will receive information about the regionalization aspect.

In conclusion, I want to deal with the administrative costs of the plan. I want to give the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville the fullest possible time to tell the House what he knows about agriculture, so I will allow him five or ten minutes.

**An hon. Member:** One minute will do.

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** There is an old saying, "Beware of Greeks bearing gifts", and I want to put that in the context of the administrative costs of this plan. One very appealing part of the legislation is that which provides that the producers will not pay any of the administrative costs involved in the program but that, rather, the costs will be borne by the federal government. I presume most producers will receive this particular proposal gladly and will accept the proposition that they will not be charged for any specific administrative costs under this legislation. But the question then arises, where will all this money come from? Once the legislation is passed, opposition

#### *Western Grain Stabilization*

members will not know the actual costs until the annual report of the stabilization fund is tabled and the estimates come before the committee.

I think it is a belief generally held even by members on the government side that since this government has been in office, government spending has reached almost uncontrollable proportions and shows no sign of easing, despite promises to that effect. Since the stabilization program is a new concept and therefore lacks experience, I am concerned about the cost of administration. I fear—I hope this will not be the case—that costs will reach epidemic proportions.

Although the bill provides that the producers will not be asked to pay the costs, I hope the producers themselves will be very observant and keep a keen eye on the cost to the general treasury of administering this plan. I think a new body of civil servants and bureaucrats will be required to operate this legislation, so there is a possibility that Parkinson's law will be put into place and there will be an increase in the size of the agency, branch or department seized with the responsibility of administering this legislation.

● (1650)

We only have to look back into the very recent past to see what happened in respect of the Canadian Egg Marketing Agency. During the committee proceedings, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) refused to accept responsibility for CEMA's difficulties and tried to lay the blame on the producers. In view of the fact that this particular administrative facet is being taken from the producers and adopted by the government, I hope the minister will publicly state his responsibility for this stabilization fund in order that the producers will know that they will not be blamed in the event that something goes wrong with the administration of the program.

I have spoken a little longer than I anticipated, Madam Speaker, and I appreciate your attention and the attention of hon. members in this chamber.

**Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville):** Madam Speaker, Bill C-41 which is before us today has really been before this House for four or five years. It has quite a fascinating history. I see the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Goodale) sitting at the back; I am sure he followed this matter many years ago when he was a university student in Saskatchewan. In the fall of 1970, or in the spring of 1971, this bill was first introduced to the House. There was quite a debate at that time and the minister tried to push the bill through. It was a bill that virtually all farm organizations and farmers in the west disagreed with violently, and they made their points of view known very clearly to the minister in charge of the Wheat Board.

As a matter of fact, we fought a by-election campaign on this bill in the riding of Assiniboia. I remember the results of that by-election very well; the government party dropped from first to third place. I thought maybe the government had learned something as a result of that by-election. Also, the election results in Saskatchewan in 1971 probably stemmed in part from the fact this bill had been before the House. One would have thought that with