

• (1150)

The Throne Speech made it clear that in meeting its commitment to Canadian agriculture this Government will spare no effort in seeking to continue to protect the interests of our farming community in the face of unfair pricing and subsidy practices beyond our borders. That is good news, not just for the producer but for virtually everyone else in Saskatchewan and the grain economy. It is well known that farm dollars are circulated many times over through the entire network of suppliers, agents, dealers, and merchandisers.

In conclusion, Bill C-12, will not of itself solve the problems facing Canadian farmers, but it will help. It is similar to a number of other initiatives such as farm debt review, rural transition, commodity-based loans, western grain stabilization, fuel rebates, help to cattle producers, improved crop insurance and drought assistance. Because it helps and because it is timely, it is part of the ongoing commitment of this Government to Canadian agriculture.

We are talking about survival, and every little bit helps. These common sense amendments in front of us today will result in elimination of potential administrative delays and will allow cash advances for harvested grain to be more readily available. These measures will assist cash flow when it is really needed. With the world grain market in its current precarious state it makes good sense to pass these amendments now to ensure that farmers obtain the maximum benefit. I therefore call upon all Members to give rapid passage to these proposals.

Mr. Speaker: Questions or comments.

Mr. White: Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague's remarks. I congratulate him on his continuing interest in and the work he has done on behalf of Canadian farmers. The economy of my constituency of Dauphin—Swan River in western Manitoba depends, for the most part, on agriculture, as does my colleague's. I believe, as does he, that this Government has proven its commitment over the past two years to western agriculture. He mentioned that the Government cannot compete with the Treasuries of either the EEC or the U.S. However, I believe, as does he, that we have gone a long way toward helping our farmers. He mentioned briefly the \$1 billion pay-out announced by the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) about three weeks ago and I would like to ask him if he could expand on the consultations and method of payment under that particular program.

Mr. Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is indeed right when he raises the significance of the \$1 billion which has been promised to Canadian farmers in this time of need. It has been stated by the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) that this payment will be forthcoming in consultation with the provinces and the farm community. That is vitally important because it is not for the Government to sit here in isolation in Ottawa and determine how money should be distributed to the farm community. That decision cannot be made in an ivory

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tower sort of atmosphere. It clearly requires the participation of the farm community. That is why it is significant that the Minister of Agriculture has had meetings with representatives of the farm community, and it is my understanding that further meetings will be held.

It is one thing to request a payment of \$1 billion and another thing to point out the need for it. That is a well known fact and I think all of us in this House understand the plight that the grain farmer finds himself in through no fault of his own. However, it is also important that the system of delivery of this benefit be seen to be fair and equitable. It has to be structured in such a way that it is accepted by the farm community and seen by most everyone to be of assistance and not favouring one particular sector or group over another.

If I have one disappointment in all of this it is perhaps the reticence of the leading farm organizations to come forward publicly with concrete suggestions. They have been very quick to note the problem at great length. They have been very quick to request cash in the form of a deficiency payment. The problem is set out in many, many pages and the solution involves one sentence. However, I think they know, as do we, that there is a lot more to it than that. Is the payment to be structured as a per bushel payment? Is it to supplement the price? Should it be done through the price of domestic wheat? Should it be paid by the acre? If so, should there be a minimum or maximum number of acres? Should there be an export enhancement scheme? There are so many ways in which this benefit can be delivered and it is time, indeed I encourage farm organizations to come forward with some concrete suggestions, to assist the Government in its deliberations. I console myself with the thought that undoubtedly these proposals are being made privately, but I think it would be encouraging if the major farm organizations in the nation would have the courage to come forward with some concrete proposals rather than expecting Government to structure a program and then reserving the right to complain about it afterwards.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I am a bit perplexed this morning. I have been listening to a number of Hon. Members describe in graphic detail the plight of the grain farmer. The point of this Bill is to advance payments as quickly as possible to those farmers. We are trying to co-operate. I would like to hear an explanation as to why members of the Government are prolonging this debate. We want to get on and deal with this as efficiently, effectively and quickly as possible. I do not know why government Members keep prolonging the debate on this Bill.

Mr. Speaker: Has the Hon. Member made a comment or asked a question? The Hon. Member for Swift Current—Maple Creek (Mr. Wilson).

Mr. Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek): Mr. Speaker, be it a question or comment I certainly welcome the opportunity to respond. It is my understanding of the operation of this place that my constituents are entitled to have me express an