

By virtue of the current legislation, we now have 14 seats. If there was a free-fall, Saskatchewan would only have 12 seats. Because of the legislation, we keep at least 14 seats. We can see the deterioration in terms of population, particularly rural population.

We have to look at what is happening in the agricultural sector. A very important economic sector is suffering greatly at this time. There are pressures of increased cost, increased interest rates and a static price for what they receive for their product. After imprecations and imploring by Members of this Party with respect to amending this Bill, we now have a Bill which, while welcome, merely increases the amount of money available for advances which can be made with respect to farm-stored grain. This is to be repaid by the farmers. It is a serious problem.

The Conservative Party has taken its responsibilities in Opposition and has forced the Government as best it can to bring forward legislation which will be of assistance to the western grain producer. It was by dint of our insistence and constant harassment of the Government that it is now coming forward with amendments to the western grain stabilization Bill.

When that Bill was first introduced in the House, we indicated some of the serious flaws and defects in it. We said the Bill was deficient inasmuch as it was not sensitive to what was happening in western Canada regarding western grain stabilization. Under that legislation, there would not be a substantial payment for a long time. This was because of the way in which the formula had been set out. We have now forced the Government to come forward with this legislation. It is committed to bringing it forward on Friday next. We are prepared to give that matter expeditious consideration, notwithstanding the very serious deficiencies and defects in it.

Let us look at the legislation now before us and some of the circumstances. My colleague from Vegreville referred to some of the problems faced by western grain producers at the present time, the prospect of bankruptcy for many producers and the other pressures they face. At this time when there are economic pressures on our farmers, including those in western Canada, freight rates will be increased by 33 per cent.

My colleague pointed out that a principal co-conspirator with respect to the Crowsnest Pass legislation, which was forced through this House by closure against the wishes of the western producer, was the Canadian Pacific Railway. The board of directors co-operated with this Government. They were the handmaidens in getting that legislation through. It is interesting to note that John Turner, now seeking leadership of the liberal Party was instrumental, as a member of the board of directors of CPR, in helping to write that legislation which is regarded with such distaste by every western producer. We now see the transformation taking place.

The Liberal Party is sending out siren calls to the western farmer and western Canadians generally about what it intends

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to do. The most interesting piece of hypocrisy that I have observed is the fact that the Minister of Transport is now supporting Mr. Turner and acting as his policy adviser in the leadership campaign.

Mr. Pepin: Relevance to the Bill.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: The relevance is that we talk about pressure on the farmers with respect to the cost of carrying on farm operations. We had a Bill foisted on us by this Government and on which closure was imposed. It involved a substantial increase in the cost of transportation for the farmer. It put pressure on western grain producers. What does the Minister of Transport advise Mr. Turner with respect to his statement on the Crowsnest Pass legislation? All of a sudden he advises him that the cap of 31 million tonnes is too low. Mr. Turner now says he will give serious consideration to increasing that level. Now he is making another promise at the behest of the Minister of Transport. Now he is going to give consideration to having a different safety net.

Mr. Mazankowski: He refused to entertain any changes.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: My colleague is right. We pressed on a number of occasions for precisely those changes in the legislation. They were rejected time after time. That is hypocrisy. The people of western Canada understand this kind of shenanigan. The western grain producers understand what is happening. They are not going to be taken in for one moment, Mr. Turner or no Mr. Turner.

While we appreciate that the Government has taken this initiative at long last, my colleague, the Hon. Member for Vegreville, pointed out that in our ten-point agricultural policy, which was released on April 5, 1983, we urged the Government to double the advance payments. In his Private Member's Bill C-218, the Hon. Member for Bow River urged the repeal of the provision in this Bill which was discrimination against farm women. That Private Member's Bill contained the very provision that was not supported by the Government at that time but was the forerunner of the provision in this Bill which urges the repeal of subsection 7(3.2).

• (1520)

I would simply like to ask a question of the Minister whose Bill is before the House today for passage. In view of the fact that the Government has taken this particular initiative with respect to the Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act, and I am sure the Minister has had notice of my question because the Hon. Member for Elgin raised this matter yesterday, I wonder if the Minister could tell us whether or not the Government is considering increasing the level of advances with respect to the Advance Payments For Crops Act, which covers grain which falls outside of the Wheat Board's authority and which covers other crops as well. Perhaps the Minister would have that information for me, or perhaps he will be able to get it for me.