

*Western Grain Stabilization*

**Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain):** My colleague aptly says, "Like the Senate". This will be an agency allowing a much broader membership than the Senate. If you look at the duties that have to be carried out under this bill, there is a very substantial requirement for staff and money.

The administrators of this provision will have to look into cases of individual farmers, and process and deal with them. That takes staff. They will have to send endorsements to individual farmers. That takes staff. They will have to work out their refunds that will have to be paid when they make mistakes, as inevitably they will. That takes staff, both to make the mistakes and prepare the refunds.

There is a requirement that they have to penalize people who are called conditional participants. It is a wonder of the English language how you can have a conditional participant in a voluntary plan. That is what we have here. They will have to police that provision to make sure that those who have the audacity to opt out of the program in the first instance are penalized. That will take staff and money. In order to make this work in individual cases, we will require large staffs, computers, Einsteins and mathematicians housed somewhere in western Canada. They will be required simply to make calculations of the way this works. Reviewing the records of individual farmers will take staff and cost money.

There is a reference in one of the explanatory notes to this bill about a public relations function that will be undertaken by the administrators of this program. From what we know about the way the government handles its public relations, that will certainly cost a lot of money. We have here, among other things, an undertaking to have the Treasury Board of Canada fund an administration program that could be very large.

When we get to the standing committee we will want answers about the kinds of activities that are going to be carried out in administering this program, and what guarantees there will be on limits on the growth and staff and cost of this program.

I come from a province where there are not many Liberals. That is one of the advantages of Alberta. My concern is that under this provision the Minister of Justice, responsible for extending comfort to Liberals in western Canada, could hire every Liberal in Alberta as an administrator of this program. That is a matter about which we have to be very careful and concerned.

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There are a number of other matters with which one could deal when discussing this legislation. It is particularly ironic that we should be considering a bill having to do with income derived from grain at a time when the real problem is not stabilizing grain incomes but the movement of the grain. My hon. friend from Vegreville dealt with this aspect, and drew attention to the failure of the ministers concerned with agriculture to confront directly this serious situation, one which causes more concern than any other to western Canadians engaged in agriculture. They are worried most of all about the increasing difficulty of moving their crops to export markets. This is where the priority should lie. Having delayed this so-called urgent measure for five months between first and second read-

[Mr. Nowlan.]

ings, surely the government could have taken some action in the interim to improve the grain transportation picture.

There are specific questions raised by this bill, and they need to be answered. One of them is of interest to a good many of my constituents who are just entering the agricultural industry. What is meant by an actual producer? Who will be eligible? Is a hobby farmer, for example, eligible to become involved in the grain stabilization program? What about the homestead farmers, perhaps someone in the Little Smokey region of Alberta who works in the oilfields to build up a farm, but who is only spending part of his time in agriculture? Is such a person an actual producer, eligible to take part in the program?

Why does the calculation of costs not take into account the interest farmers have to pay on debt? Why does it not take into account the depreciation of capital? Another question: whatever happened to this mythical study of regionalization to which the Minister of Justice alluded in his brief statement in December? Is it simply to remain a study? Has such a study in fact been conducted? And, if so, will the minister tell us what it contains? Is there a chance that the legislation we are dealing with will be changed because of the impact of that study?

Why is the only option available to farmers under this program an option to go out? Why should the system not be reversed so that the option would be to come in? That would be a genuinely voluntary approach, whereas what we find in the bill is a highly qualified example of the exercise of voluntary will.

I have another important question while the Minister of Agriculture is here. What will be the tie-in, administratively or in terms of policy, with the Department of Agriculture? Will the system being set up here continue as an empire of its own under the Minister of Justice, or will machinery be established to ensure that activities carried out under the grain stabilization program are consistent with other policies? What is to be the role of the Minister of Agriculture in this piece of agricultural legislation which has been removed from his jurisdiction because of the insatiable ambition of a Minister of Justice who wants to be responsible for whatever he can lay his hands on?

What will be the cost of administration, money which will have to be found by the Treasury Board? I am interested in the size of the staff which will be required. Will the Minister of Justice be able to go out and hire every Liberal in Alberta, or will more than 11 people be needed to run this scheme?

**An hon. Member:** The filibuster is getting entertaining, anyway.

**Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain):** There are a great many other questions which some of my hon. friends will be raising as the debate proceeds. We are pleased the bill is back in the House in a form which has been considerably improved. Apparently the government has learned a lesson; it is a better bill than the one it started with. Though it gives rise to a number of problems and there are a great many questions to be asked about it, this legislation is of importance to the part of the country from which I come. It is essential that before we get to third reading, before we conclude the committee stage, an opportunity be provided for grain farmers to contribute directly to the