

Grain Advance Payments

In closing, Madam Speaker, I should like to say that this party supports the amendments.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Madam Speaker, in response to the smiles that I see on a few faces because I am taking the floor with respect to this bill, I should like to point out, as all hon. members are aware, that the Standing Committee on Agriculture is on one of its trips out west and our farm spokesmen are with it. That is the reason the minister responsible for the Wheat Board saw me shaking my head a few minutes ago when it was suggested that this bill might be put through all stages here on the floor of the House this afternoon. It is precisely because members of the Standing Committee on Agriculture are away today that I think it would be better for the normal routine to be followed and for this bill to be sent to the standing committee after second reading.

Generally speaking, we are prepared to support the bill. As its title makes clear, it is the second amendment to the Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act which the government is proposing this year. The first one increased the maximum advance payment for grain delivered under a permit book from \$6,000 to \$15,000 in the case of an individual producer, to \$30,000 in the case of a corporation, partnership or co-operative with two members, and to \$45,000 in the case of a multi-farm unit of three or more. As hon. members are aware, we supported that legislation, Bill C-10, which was introduced earlier in the present session.

● (1540)

The bill before us, Bill C-53, does two things, as the minister said. It raises by 2½ times the maximum advance which a producer may obtain to finance the drying of damp or tough grain, or with respect to unthreshed grain. We agree that in present circumstances these higher limits are more realistic and we are prepared to support that part of the bill.

We shall also support the other part of the bill; but, Madam Speaker, it raises issues which we think ought to be discussed in the Standing Committee on Agriculture. That other part is to be found in the clauses of the bill which authorize, in respect of off-board sales, the deduction and remittance to the Canadian Wheat Board of amounts which the board should be able to collect to cover outstanding cash advances made by the Canadian Wheat Board.

This is a straightforward and welcome proposal, but it has been made necessary because of the new policy for the marketing of domestic feed grains. This policy has been continuously in effect since 1974. Its effect has been to remove domestic feed grains from the exclusive control of the Canadian Wheat Board. In our view, this opens the way for exploitation by the private grain trade and the Winnipeg commodity exchange. This second part of the bill is thus consequential to that change in policy. We think that aspects of that policy and this bill's relationship to it should be discussed in the Standing Committee on Agriculture. We are prepared this afternoon to agree to the second reading of Bill C-53, but we think it should follow the ordinary course and be sent to the standing committee.

[Mr. Ritchie.]

[Translation]

Mr. C.-A. Gauthier (Roberval): Madam Speaker, notwithstanding the absence of our agriculture committee representative who is away on a trip, as just mentioned by the previous speaker, I wish to say a few words on behalf of the Social Credit Party of Canada concerning Bill C-53.

I feel that the bill is a follow-up of sorts on former Bill C-10 which considerably increased advance payments that were made effective at the beginning of 1957, 1958 and 1959. In my opinion, this afternoon's bill, in addition to increasing to \$30,000 the advance payments of \$6,500-\$15,000 for a farm operated by relatives, brothers and sisters, also deals with a new situation, that of a farmer who has damp or unthreshed grain. For such a situation, the bill makes the following provision:

This amendment would increase the maximum advance payment a producer may obtain to finance the drying of damp or tough grain from the lesser of 10¢ a bushel or \$600 to the lesser of 25 cents a bushel or \$1,500.

In my opinion, this represents a great improvement for western farmers, who will finally have substantial aid for drying their grain. The same applies in the bill in the case of unthreshed grain, as may be noted by the following provision:

This amendment would increase the maximum amount of advance payment under the Act that a producer may obtain on unthreshed grain from \$3,000 to \$7,500.

Madam Speaker, we are in favour of both amendments, and equally in favour of the third amendment which authorizes payment, to the board, of a portion of a producer's receipts for grain delivered to a licensed elevator. I think it is the first time I witness such an amendment being submitted, but on the other hand, I believe it is normal for the board to be able to get something from the producer who is protected by the board and has the advantage of delivering his grain other than through the board.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, we are in favour of this bill and, I repeat, we are happy for western farmers and we hope that similar amendments will be submitted for eastern farmers with regard to their regular production.

[English]

Mr. Don Mazankowski (Vegreville): Mr. Speaker, before the bill is sent to committee I should like to say a few words to indicate my support for it. It will help producers in areas affected by unfavourable weather conditions and thus unable to harvest their crops. To that extent, this legislation will be helpful. I hope farmers will not need to avail themselves of it, although considering the lateness of the season this year, some may.

We have not discussed a wheat bill for some time. Therefore, I hope the minister will extend the scope of this debate and tell the House the present state of the world grain industry. Can he say, from his vantage point, what the prospects are for the future, especially for Canadian producers? I ask this question because one hears differences of opinion expressed about the condition of the grain market. Some quarters report that demand is still fairly strong, or it was strong until fairly recently. We are told that sales have been fairly brisk. Yet it is apparent that there has been a decline both in demand and in price.