

Government Orders

Security in agriculture, both in farming and in processing, is important. Indeed, it is crucial to the future of the industry. For farm families in rural Canada in general, any and every program put forward by this or any other government must ensure viability and the better future that brings to all rural Canadians.

The minister sees GRIP as one of the first programs in a package flowing from his green paper, *Growing Together*, issued earlier in this government's term. The paper was based on four pillars: market responsiveness, self-reliance, regional sensitivity and environmental sustainability. For the most part this translates into a plan that eventually removes government support in times of need. If we examine GRIP closely, we see that that is exactly how it has been designed.

Farmers will always be committed to high premiums, but in a few years will likely be guaranteed no more than the market price for their grains and oilseeds. With the 15-year moving average provision, we are being asked to buy into a package that will eventually guarantee only low prices, below production cost prices for our products. This is nonsense.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Order, please. I would like to hear the hon. member, if you do not mind. It is a great speech. The hon. member, please.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I realize the member for Vegreville and the member for Kindersley—Lloydminster have a lot to talk about after what I have had to say here. I am very pleased to hear that they are listening so intently.

For a farm to be viable, without total government support and without every member of the family working off the farm, we need to secure prices, at a bare minimum, that cover the costs of production. If not, the debt climbs and more people will be pushed off the farms.

At second reading I outlined other government agriculture programs which are tied into the marketplace philosophy of this government, like the interest free cash advance which was taken away just when it was needed most and the termination of the branch line rehabilitation program which has speeded up the rail lines abandonment schedule. Even the Saskatchewan Conservative government knows this is wrong and is complaining that

the federal government is merely passing the grain transportation costs of maintaining the rail beds to the provinces which have to maintain the roadbeds.

That raises one other very important matter. Bill C-98 and the GRIP and NISA programs do what this government is attempting to do across the board; decentralize the economy and off load federal costs on to the provinces. Agriculture is an important national industry and should be treated as such. The federal government should not and cannot expect the Saskatchewan taxpayer to shoulder any more of the financial burden. The national taxpayer and those who benefit from a government supported cheap food policy should assume the costs of maintaining the industry.

For the wage earners of Toronto, Montreal, Winnipeg and Vancouver, to pay a greater share of the Canadian food costs would only be fair.

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Then the province of Saskatchewan would be free to look after its own responsibilities like education and health care. I do not have enough time to get into all the federal programs that have been designed to push people out of agriculture, but I stress that is happening and that is happening on purpose.

The numbers speak for themselves. Anyone who has already lost his farm knows exactly what I am talking about. Just two days ago I attended a meeting in a farming community in my own constituency. I was overwhelmed with the sense of depression that existed among the farmers present. Many knew that GRIP was going to reduce their incomes over the long term, and most wanted changes made to the program which none have yet seen in any detail.

For the most part the farmers were resigned to the fact that GRIP would become a reality. Some were saying they would never sign up for it and expressed a desire for deficiency payments to get them through this period of low prices. Other said: what the heck, they will sign up in the early years and then withdraw when the guaranteed price starts to decline. They need the money now and are quite prepared to do almost anything to get it quickly. If that means signing up for a flawed and inadequate program that will eventually destroy their industry, they are willing to take their chances.