

Government Orders

Forgive me for my cynicism, but I think it is important to get these things into perspective.

Now, I want to list, since I have only four or five more minutes, some other concerns that will have to be dealt with at committee. This leads to some technical questions. But let me just touch on a few.

There is a concern, a worry on the part of some producers that GRIP is going to be a nightmare to administer. Here is a quote from one Saskatchewan farmer by the name of Jim Coghlin: "When I look at the plan I see a glaring opportunity for abuse; given the times morals can fall out of our pockets pretty fast". That is what the gentleman from Saskatchewan said.

There is a concern about GRIP distorting the market. There have been many questions raised by certain agricultural experts, particularly in the provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. One of the worries they have is that GRIP will distort the market. In effect, what they are saying is this: take wheat, for example, the wheat market around the world says: don't grow wheat, please don't grow wheat, the price is terrible, you can do better elsewhere. But what does GRIP say? More or less GRIP says: grow wheat, please grow wheat, you can make more money growing wheat. And that does not come as any great surprise.

So, there could be some serious distortion in the marketplace as a result of that. We are going to have to pursue this in committee.

There is also the concern that there will be an expanded acreage of specialty crops which could produce—and I underline the word "could"—a glut on the market of these specialty crops. If that happens that would only lower the prices of the specialty crops, and at the same time would raise the costs of the farm safety program.

There is also the worry that the program may discourage good farming practices. I want to mention something that was said by an organization called Agri Decision Research and Consulting of Winnipeg. It points out that a farmer would get the same revenue for a 20 bushel an acre crop as for a 35 bushel an acre crop. The reasoning goes, according to this organization, that if the farmer has to spend money, for example, on fertilizer to get the larger yield, would the farmer do it? Or is he just, in his

opinion, throwing money away under the GRIP program?

I think it is a legitimate concern, something that is going to have to be dealt with at some length when the bill goes to committee.

There is also the concern that GRIP discourages diversification, that bankers will be telling producers "stay with the tried and the proven; stay with the conventional cropping, because that is where the lower risks lie; don't try anything too new; don't diversify". It is a concern that we have.

There is also the concern that GRIP will not result in conservation, that at least some farmers will rush out and tear up marginal land, like hay land, to maximize their acreage, to in effect maximize their yield.

While we support the principle of this bill, because we have an obligation to take care of our farmers, they are going through tough times. There are questions about this program, as there would be questions about any program. I think the hon. Minister of Agriculture pointed out in his speech this morning that in anything like this there will be differences of opinion.

• (1600)

If we were bringing in a program something like this, there would be questions. The same applies to this program being brought in by the Minister of Agriculture.

We want it to go to committee as quickly as possible where we can look at this bill in much more detail.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member a question. I appreciate very much the very constructive and positive tone of his speech. Some of the points that he did raise obviously need to be addressed.

Having regard to the fact that we have gone through a five or six year period where we had disastrous price levels and other natural disasters that have had a very devastating impact upon the agricultural community, particularly grains and oilseeds, perhaps they would have been out of business had it not been for the generosity of the people of Canada and the support that the federal government directed.