

Then, the Federation of Agriculture pointed out the urgent necessity of immediately supplementing the incomes of Prairie farmers, which is clearly evidenced by the disastrous figures on farm income which were recently released by Canada Statistics. The brief continues:

—there is little doubt that grain growers are operating on a net loss basis or close to it in western Canada. The net realized income for example to all of Saskatchewan agriculture was \$200 million in 1970. In the years 1963-67 it averaged \$435 million. If "income in kind" is deducted from these figures the change was from \$368 million to \$131 million.

Then, the Federation summed it up in this way:

The Saskatchewan example is used because it illustrates most clearly the grain grower's disastrous income position, which for grain growers will be the same in the other Prairie provinces.

There is a reference, then to the helplessness of the farmer in dealing with some of these problems:

As a direct result of world market conditions over which he has no control and little possibility of predicting or anticipating, plus heavily subsidized competition from other exporters, the prairie grain purchaser has undergone, and continues to undergo, this vicious and disastrous shrinking of his income. We must insist that improved support of the level of farm income among prairie producers, and continuing, major support to prairie income from the federal government in face of present and prospective world conditions, is a necessity.

It must be recognized that this bill is clearly designed to place definite limits on the federal obligation to support prairie income—

I would draw to your attention, Mr. Speaker, that what they call for here is not just stabilization but additional support for prairie farm income; and certainly this is one part of the picture that we need to consider. The brief continues:

● (2:40 p.m.)

Consider that the likely federal financial obligation under this policy (which includes the termination of the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act with no replacement of it by an alternative and better national storage reserve stocks policy with federal sharing of costs) is less than has been undertaken by the government through the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act alone in the course of the last 15 years.

The federation goes on to call for a two-price system and for changes in the formula in respect of grain stabilization. Their basic recommendations are that transitional payments must be made immediately, and not be made conditional either upon acceptance of the rest of the bill as it stands or upon its rapid passage. The second recommendation is that aside from transitional payments the bill is not acceptable as it stands. The federation then states that while it supports the principle of a stabilization policy, there are certain changes which must be made in the bill.

In this bill we are dealing with the principle of emergency payments to prairie farmers. We are also dealing with a permanent stabilization plan which the government proposes to introduce. I think I made it clear in my remarks that we consider the transitional payments or emergency payments to be totally inadequate. The provisions of this bill are not going to rescue the prairie farmers from the morass in which they are at the present time.

Prairie Grain Stabilization Act

I have also made it clear that we regard the stabilization plan as being not good enough. It is, in fact, totally inadequate. It does not do the job envisaged by the government or by the task force and is not a plan acceptable to the western farmers. Thus, we feel that further consideration does need to be given to this matter. Therefore, I should like to move, seconded by the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Douglas):

That Bill C-224 be not now read the second time but that it be resolved that in the opinion of this House the said bill should be withdrawn and that the government should consider introducing a new bill that would increase the amount of the proposed special transitional payments to \$250 million and that would relate the proposed grain stabilization plan to an adequate level of farm net income which takes into account increasing costs of production.

I recommend this amendment to the House as being one which would, in fact, achieve some positive results for the farmers of western Canada.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Hon. members have heard the amendment moved by the hon. member for Regina East (Mr. Burton). The question the Chair has before it is whether it may be accepted from a procedural standpoint. If it is acceptable within the precedents and practices of this House, the Chair would be anxious to make that ruling. I have to express an initial concern and ask hon. members whether they would like to assist the Chair in its consideration of the amendment. My concern relates to the well established practice that a reasoned amendment, which this purports to be, must oppose the principle of the bill. It would seem to me that this does not oppose the principle. The hon. member, in his closing remarks, referred to what he felt were the two principles of the bill. It seems to me this amendment might extend one of them but does not, in fact, oppose either. I would invite the assistance of hon. members on the procedural point.

Mr. Burton: I appreciate the point Your Honour has raised in respect of my proposed amendment. I submit that it is in order because, as you have pointed out, this is a reasoned amendment and does in fact propose an alternative which opposes the principle of the bill as it is now before us. There are two major points I should like to make.

First of all, I would draw Your Honour's attention to the fact that this bill provides for the expenditure or allocation of moneys. The bill does involve the government's responsibilities and the power of government initiative in dealing with money matters. There are very limited ways and means available to the opposition to make its point of view known in respect of moneys it feels should be allocated for whatever plan is finally devised. I am suggesting that, while it is not possible for us to move directly that there be additional moneys spent, in fact what we are proposing here is a resolution expressing the opinion that the government should consider an additional expenditure of money and an additional commitment for the purposes outlined in the bill.

Second, I would submit to Your Honour that in the amendment as I have framed it, there is an alternative which is opposite or in opposition to the principle of the