

Western Grain Stabilization

duction and sale of western grain and to amend certain statutes in consequence thereof, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Agriculture.

Mr. Don Mazankowski (Vegreville): Mr. Speaker, in rising to speak on Bill C-41 I cannot help reflecting on what happened to the forerunner of this piece of legislation—Bill C-244, the prairie grain stabilization bill which was introduced in 1971. To put it mildly, the bill had a torrid history. It generated bitter debate and animosity in the minds of western Canadian farmers. It is fair to say that it united prairie producers in their extreme opposition to the measure. That opposition was stiff, and eventually the government withdrew the bill. The *Edmonton Journal* wrote, in an editorial in October, 1971, that the legislation was a disaster. I quote from the editorial:

● (1510)

The withdrawal of the grain stabilization bill is not, as Otto Lang suggested, "a major defeat for the farmer."

It was a defeat for the Trudeau government and for Mr. Lang, who was the federal minister responsible for the bill. It is understandable that he should feel bitter. But there is no reason why the farmers should suffer.

If the Trudeau government is still convinced that it had a good plan for stabilizing prairie grain income, there is no reason why the bill cannot be reintroduced, in a modified form to take into account the criticism the original received in western Canada.

The experience in which we were engaged during that period of time brought forth a better product; the bill is considerably improved. While there are still a number of areas which require clarification and changes, nevertheless it is an improvement over the original legislation.

What were some of the features of the bill to which there was opposition when it was first introduced? The major objection was the \$100 million carrot that was dangled in front of the producers. It was an attempt to coerce them into buying the stabilization package. It was made up of money which was due to the farmers at that time under the provisions of the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act. That created a great deal of hostility in the minds of producers across this country.

The second major objection at that time was that the bill failed to take regional considerations into account. That area still requires improvement. I am encouraged by the fact that the minister indicated he may be receptive to some changes in this regard. I hope that in committee some way will be found to take into account the aspects of a failure in any given region. The third major objection to the bill at that time was that it was mandatory for a producer to belong to and pay into a fund. That issue created a great deal of hard feeling. The fourth objection was the fact there was no provision for taking into account increased production and inflation costs.

The fifth major objection was that, based upon the previous five-year prairie grain income, the bill would do nothing more than stabilize grain income across western Canada at the poverty level. We know that at that time the price of grain was very depressed. The hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Goodale) shakes his head in the negative. I say to him that was the opinion of every major farm organization in the country at that time. It was certainly the opinion of the hon. member's predecessor and many other members of this House. That was perhaps the major

[Mr. Speaker.]

reason for a great deal of the animosity and bitterness that was generated over the bill.

Another area of objection was the fact that payments from the fund were based upon gross, rather than net, income figures. This bill is based upon the same principle as the original stabilization bill, but I think we must give credit to the minister and those who drafted the bill for taking into consideration some of the issues that were raised when it was first considered.

We have objections to this bill: I have already referred to some of them. The bill appears to be very complex in nature. It takes into consideration some of the objections registered against the original bill and some improvements have been made. However, some of our major objections, such as taking into consideration the regional aspect, have not been met. As I said previously, there will have to be some provision for a major failure in a given block. I referred to a snowed-under condition in the Peace River block. This is a common occurrence. An area may be subjected to a drought. Members opposite will suggest these situations can be covered by crop insurance; however, there is the prospect of a whole province suffering a severe calamity, with no hope of drawing a penny from the stabilization fund.

When dealing with this bill it is a good time to take into consideration these problems and, if possible, to incorporate in the legislation a mechanism to deal with them. This bill seems to contain a great deal of legalistic jargon. The hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin) stated yesterday that it could conceivably become an administrative nightmare. Even the best legal minds find it somewhat difficult to decipher the content and purport of some clauses of the bill. If it does become an administrative nightmare, I suggest that will be good for the minister; it will enable him to provide employment opportunities for prairies Grits.

Mr. Lang: It will be very simple.

Mr. Mazankowski: I hope the minister explains it better than he did in his speech, because there is in the bill a great deal which should be explained much more thoroughly. I hope the minister will do that in committee.

Mr. Benjamin: The farmers want to know.

Mr. Mazankowski: As the hon. member says, the farmers want to have a better understanding of the legalistic jargon contained in the bill. There is room in this bill for a fair amount of streamlining. Hopefully, the minister will be open-minded and will accept some of the suggestions that will undoubtedly be made by members on this side of the House. There are some uncertainties and we want clarification of them. For example, I am somewhat confused about the statement that it is voluntary, yet it is really not voluntary. That statement requires clarification. There are penalties and there are some discriminatory features when one wants to withdraw from the program.

The major objection, however, is the fact that this bill lumps together the whole prairie region. The minister indicated that the regional aspect has been seriously considered and that it is difficult to comply with. However, I feel it should be the subject of further serious consider-