

*Prairie Grain Stabilization Act*

• (3:40 p.m.)

To add insult to injury, we have the controversy of the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act. I am told that there is now something in the order of \$80 million which should be paid to the Canadian Wheat Board and then to the farmers. Let us not continue with the old style of politics in which there is an attempt to bribe and blackmail the people with little gifts, and then ask them to accept something which they do not want at all. This is contempt for the people themselves. I speak not as a politician trying to make points but as someone who grew up on a small farm, and whose family is still on a very small farm. Everytime I see my family and friends, I understand the difficulty they are facing and the fear they have that the government no longer listens to them or really cares about them, but wishes to implement some things in the task force report which would mean that eventually two-thirds of the farms would be threatened or destroyed. That does not have to be the case. We could bring in some genuine amendments to this bill so that it would be a good bill and one which would be accepted by the farmers in the prairie provinces. So, I appeal to the minister, through you Mr. Speaker, to seriously consider postponing or adjourning this debate at some time and really listening sincerely to the voice of the farmers in western Canada or at least to the three prairie governments which represent them.

This bill was first introduced into this House several months ago. It was debated for a considerable length of time in the committee. A number of people appeared before that committee as witnesses. Then, the bill came back to the House and was debated again on June 22. As I said before, the minister has accused us of being political and of filibustering the bill because there was a Saskatchewan election. This is not the case. I do not think we should concern ourselves with political points of this type. We could be as equally suspicious that the minister has introduced the bill just before a by-election as he has been that we are filibustering. Let us stop playing games, let us get down to business and do something really meaningful for the farmers of western Canada.

**Mr. Osler:** Mr. Speaker, would the member allow a question?

**Mr. Nystrom:** I think I will allow a question from the farmer from Winnipeg South Centre.

**Mr. Osler:** I am the first one to admit I am certainly not a farmer, but even labouring under that handicap—

**An hon. Member:** It is not a handicap.

**Mr. Osler:** I was referring to the handicap of not being a farmer. Is the member saying that with these amendments this bill is a reasonable bill or is he suggesting that the whole thing should be tossed out? Is he seriously discussing the merits of the bill with or without the amendments or is he saying the whole thing is so wide of the mark that we are wasting our time discussing it? I am confused about what he has been saying.

**Mr. Nystrom:** I say that we should divide the bill and send out the \$100 million right away. I think all this is understood. The minister asked about the bills as well as the amendments. To answer the first part of the question,

we suggest the bill should be divided and that the \$100 million should be sent out. Just try us on that. I am sure we are all in agreement on that point. Second, I think we should really study the entire concept of stabilization. Let suggestions come from the farmers, from the grassroots, to the people who actually draft the bill. Let suggestions come from the farm organizations to the government rather than from the top to the people below. In the event the minister will not listen to us and will not withdraw the bill, we have suggested a series of amendments which we think will improve the bill as it stands on the order paper today. These are amendments which would take into account the cost of production, which would take into consideration factors which would increase the total income of the farmers and that would take into consideration 100 per cent of farm income instead of 90 per cent, and so on. If we cannot have the whole bill studied, we would at least like to have some of these amendments considered very seriously.

There are a number of other things I could say about this bill which concern the farmers back home. However, one thing which seems to be of very great concern to western farmers is the fact that this bill will stabilize their income on the basis of an average over the past five years. Most people say that if you did this you would be basically stabilizing farm income in western Canada at the poverty level. Many people fail to realize that the net farm income—and this again indicates the difference between net and gross—has fallen drastically in western Canada over the last few years. I have some statistics from the Dominion Bureau of Statistics which I believe are very relevant and which should help members of this House in comprehending what is happening out there. These statistics are from the May edition of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics and show that the net farm income in the province of Saskatchewan fell from \$462,348,000 in 1968 to \$202,718,000 in 1970, a drop of about 56 per cent over a two year period.

**An hon. Member:** That is why we want the gross.

**Mr. Nystrom:** One reason we should change this bill is to really help the average farmer instead of hindering him. Why stabilize his income at such a low level? Why not do something to put some cash into the farmer's pockets? The minister and members say, look at the sales. If we were receiving a decent price for wheat we would not mind looking at the sales. We get less for a bushel of wheat now than we did in 1969, despite the fact that the cost of bread and so on has gone up drastically and despite the fact that there is no guarantee that the cost of these other commodities will not go up in the next year. These are some of the real factors the farmer faces and which he cannot control. If the farmer had the say, maybe we would not be as adamant now about some of the things we say but the farmer cannot control these factors and that is why he needs a better stabilization bill than he is getting now. In respect of farm income, the same situation applies in Alberta and Manitoba as in Saskatchewan.

Farm income in Manitoba fell from about \$162 million in 1968 to about \$79 million in 1970, and in Alberta farm income fell from about \$364 million to about \$226 million. So, this trend is uniform right across the board in the prairie provinces. We must do something to guarantee in a