

Prairie Grain Stabilization Act

bers of the House that I shall not abuse the privilege which has been granted to me. I appreciate it very much.

I was saying that the farmer lives on 13 per cent of his gross sales. In charging him 2 per cent of gross sales you are, in effect, taking 5 per cent of his net income. This is why I wholeheartedly support the principle of the first two amendments moved to this bill. I know how much the government wants to help the farmers. I know how much members opposite want to get this legislation through.

Mr. Rose: Support the NDP.

Mr. Horner: I support these amendments and would gladly have moved them myself, but I consulted fellow members of the agricultural committee and knew they were going to move them.

Mr. Rose: Where are they?

Mr. Horner: They have been tabled.

Mr. Rose: They must be under the table, then.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order. The Chair is of the opinion that this exchange between two hon. members does not further the debate. I hope that in the extra time allotted to him, the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) will continue his remarks.

Mr. Horner: I appreciate Your Honour's comments and apologize for being side-tracked by some odd remarks.

I want to make this clear. We tabled amendments. When I go into a committee I do not play partisan politics.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Horner: The members of that committee work together. If a member belongs to a political party and says he intends to submit certain amendments, I say, "Fine. I will submit other amendments." I do not question his motives. I believe that as a member of the agricultural committee he must be motivated by concern for the good of the farmer.

An hon. Member: Right.

Mr. Horner: We in this party have filed amendments; members of the NDP have filed amendments. I want to say this clearly so that the minister will understand: We on this side are prepared to see the passage of this bill, with certain amendments. I would hope that the minister, in this hour of need of farmers in western Canada, in this hour, perhaps, of political need in view of the Assiniboia by-election, will accept some common sense amendments to the bill before us. The measure deals exclusively with western Canada. When the minister said, "Let us take it to the people", did he really mean that? If he did, let us get our heads together and make some reasonable changes to the legislation.

I am not saying that the amendments which I, the hon. member for Mackenzie (Mr. Korchinski), the hon. member for Timiskaming (Mr. Peters) or the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Gleave) have moved must be accepted. But I urge the minister to take counsel. Let us get our heads together; let us move and accept some good amendments, as parliamentarians, not as partisan politicians, for the sake of the farmers of western Canada. I

[Mr. Horner.]

make this plea on behalf of the western farmers and ask the minister to consider it.

• (8:20 p.m.)

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I am taking part in the debate on these motions moved by the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Gleave) because I have a degree of certainty in my mind that grain farmers, right across political lines in my constituency, are insisting on this. Even if I were ignorant, I am not stupid about how the people who are most affected by this kind of legislation feel about it.

The motions regarding costs of production and what the minister thinks is so holy about 90 per cent of income rather than 100 per cent are a reflection, I think, of the title of this bill, which includes the word "stabilization". This word has a favourable connotation; it gives one the impression of something good, of some kind of improvement. But the word "stabilization" as used in Bill C-244 carries with it nothing more than an abstract concept devoid of any particular meaning. It is particularly meaningless since the title of the bill is "An act respecting the stabilization of prairie grain sale proceeds," and so on.

The hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) referred to the words "grain incomes" and quoted the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) who said something about grain incomes. But what my hon. friend from Crowfoot should remember and what the Prime Minister should remember is that the minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board (Mr. Lang) has never once alleged, intimated or claimed that this bill has anything to do with grain incomes. This bill has to do with grain sale proceeds, and there is a great deal of difference between the two. When the minister uses the word "stabilization" in the title of his bill, it strips it of all meaning in the sense of how you or I, Mr. Speaker, would understand the word.

If the bill were described as a bill to "stabilize grain incomes" there would be much validity to the use of the word "stabilization" in both the title and the content of the bill. This is why we believe that in the context of the title of the bill the word "stabilization" is devoid of meaning. There is a failure to apply the word "stabilization" to "grain incomes" instead of "grain sale proceeds". What a Chamber of Commerce, lovey-dovey, finance company type of title that, is!

There are reasons why members of the opposition have moved this kind of amendment to the bill, and I suspect some members on the government side would also like to move such an amendment. The minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board may be able to convince himself that the members of the opposition are bluffing or playing politics because of a Saskatchewan election, an Alberta election, an Assiniboia by-election, or any kind of election in western Canada, but I hope that by now he has the message that we are not bluffing.

I hope that the farmers of Assiniboia invite the minister to a debate on this subject. None of us has any illusions about our political lives, even if the minister has. I will take whatever chances I have in terms of how I assess the mood and feelings of the grain farmers in the three prairie provinces, let alone in my own constituency. Particularly will I take my chances in terms of how the grain farmers in the minister's constituency feel.