

Western Grain Stabilization Act

Government and in return the farmers have received federal Government interest rates. You and I know, Mr. Speaker, that during these past several years farmers have been paying up to 20 per cent and 22 per cent interest on their money. In turn they were probably getting about 10 per cent or 11 per cent from the Government. It is not a very fair way of treating farmers.

Another thing I would remind you of, Mr. Speaker, is that when the Minister of Transport brought this Bill in, the Government was obligated to put in \$2 for every \$1 that the producer put in. But what happened? The Government did not put the money in. It was just a paper figure. The Minister once more broke faith with the western Canadian producers. Well, you can only do that for so long. No matter what you do now, you are not going ever to redeem yourself in the eyes of the western Canadian farmer. They will not accept it. Therefore, Government Members should understand why there are not going to be any Liberal Members from western Canada after the next election. Regardless of the promises John Turner makes, regardless of what will happen, the voters will not be dissuaded from what they are about to do. They are just not interested, especially now with this \$650 million going into the coffers of the railroad. That is just a great gift for the railroad.

Mr. Pepin: It is not a gift; it moves grain.

Mr. Towers: A great thing for the latest director appointed to Canadian Pacific. Just a great gift. The shares of CP went up and why wouldn't they? How many shares do directors have given to them because of this gift? The Canadian taxpayer picks up the tab as well as the western grain producer. The producers are losing on both ends. Not only is it costing them more to move grain—

Mr. Pepin: Because of volume.

Mr. Towers: —a 50 per cent increase by August 1 in the price of moving grain, but at the same time the price of grain is coming down. I realize the Minister for External Relations, however great a guy he is, when he listens to some of his colleagues does get some wrong figures. It was not a personal criticism of him when I said that some of those figures were misleading.

Mr. Pepin: Which ones?

Mr. Towers: You were not here when I mentioned that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Herbert): Order, please. I must insist that remarks be addressed to the Chair.

Mr. Towers: Mr. Speaker, I apologize because I do not want to insult either you or the Minister. He is too nice a guy. Nevertheless, it is going to be about \$750 million at the end of the year. I mentioned this earlier and the Minister was not around to hear it; that is why I reiterated that statement.

The real problem, Mr. Speaker, is that the federal Government is trying to take too much out of the system, especially as far as western agriculture is concerned. Consider that about 69

cents on every gallon of fuel the western farmer uses in the production of grain goes right into federal coffers. If the Government were to cut that tax, then I could understand it being well received in western Canada. They would love that.

● (1430)

Why can we not cut our cost of production in Canada? That is one area in which no other country, including the United States, can criticize us. The fact is that we are cutting our cost of production and it can never be construed as a subsidy. We have tried to tell the Government of ways and means to correct the economic problems of western Canadians, especially the grain producers. If no one is listening, nothing will happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Herbert): There will follow a 10 minute period for questions or comments. If there are no questions, the Hon. Member for Wetaskiwin (Mr. Schellenberger) continuing debate.

Mr. Stan Schellenberger (Wetaskiwin): Mr. Speaker, I very much enjoy following the Hon. Member for Red Deer (Mr. Towers) in this debate. It is a difficult thing to do because he is so precise that he almost steals all of one's thunder. I do not want to repeat the excellent messages that he and my colleagues from Moose Jaw and Assiniboia have given the House.

I would like to begin by saying that we offered the Government the opportunity to have this Bill passed quickly. We even offered to pass a number of Budget Bills very quickly in order to have this Bill passed. Of course, the Bill was not ready. We caught them off guard. It took from April until the middle of May to produce the Bill. The press conference in Winnipeg was really a bit of a façade. However, both of the individuals at the press conference were considering running for the leadership and they needed a bit of visibility in the Prairies. Therefore, I can understand the timing of the press conference.

When we offered to pass this Bill quickly the Government decided that perhaps it was not such a bad idea to have one day of debate at second reading stage and then go to committee. That seemed odd at the time. I could not understand that, Mr. Speaker. Today, however, it becomes clear. It is because of the pressure that the farm groups in western Canada, supported by the Members of the Progressive Party, were putting on the Government to come forward with an interim payment which is so essential at this time. The western grain stabilization pool is really the only pool of capital that western farmers can draw upon, and they desperately need the money now to pay their costs. Today the Minister stood in his place and said that they have now seen the light and are producing the amendments. Of course the only time an amendment can be passed, Mr. Speaker, is at committee or report stage. Therefore we are now going to see the amendment brought forward to offer the Canadian farmer an interim payment from this fund. There is no argument about that. We accept that and are happy that our logic, lobbying and pressure have been successful. The only thing I lament is that they did not accept that pressure sooner. The crops are being put in the ground now. The farm retail operators who sell fertilizer and