

*Western Grain Stabilization*

In most years there will be no pay-out, so the 2 per cent collected from the producers will go to the bank to be used by the government in financing its spending. The federal government will not have to put any money in the bank; it will merely deposit IOUs. Even in the years of pay-out, the government will still be collecting its 2 per cent. I doubt, unless there should be a very severe depression in the industry even worse than in 1968-69, that there will be any call on the federal treasury. Indeed, I am quite sure the federal government will not have to put any money at all into the fund. Again, when pay-outs are made they will be made on a blanket basis. If a crop failure should trigger the pay-out at a time when farmers who sell, for instance, rapeseed or flax are able to sell at good prices when wheat prices are reduced, the government will recover much of the pay-out in income tax and in fact the pay-out will largely be a bookkeeping item.

It seems to me that the legislation makes no allowance for regional pay-outs, and because of the variables in respect of production and sale of the five main grains and oilseeds involved there will be limited ability to help the whole industry. The whole grain industry is now being sheltered so much by governments and government bodies that it is in danger of losing its perspective. I think it is significant that the attempt to place rapeseed and flax under the Wheat Board was defeated by the growers. Individual farmers are largely being placed in a position where the only decision open to them is the number of acres of various crops they will seed. The sales the Wheat Board makes and the prices it sets, when they are made public, are so general that the producer is not able to gain any perspective in respect of the market situation.

The necessity to have quotas is also a deterrent to efficient maximization with regard to the production of grain. There does not seem to be any way around the quota situation. I do not see how the bill is helpful along these lines. One provision in the bill I would strongly support is that which provides that the individual producer should have a voluntary choice. I think a substantial number of producers will find that they wish to operate outside this support program. If some producers should choose to operate outside this support program, they certainly should have that opportunity. I also believe that some farmers who are new entrants to the industry will perhaps not wish to participate.

It is obvious that no support program is superior to good management. This bill is so complex that highly competent people in some cases have difficulty understanding the effect the bill might have. It seems likely that no one can reasonably forecast how the bill will function, when put into operation, with regard to many of its aspects. Having this in mind, I believe the bill deserves very careful study in committee both in respect of its possible ramifications and in order to ascertain whether or not it can be improved.

**Mr. S. J. Korchinski (Mackenzie):** Madam Speaker, I should like to recite some of the reasons I feel that prior to proceeding with this bill in the normal fashion, the grain farmers of western Canada who are specifically involved in the bill should be provided with an opportunity to receive answers to obvious questions. I have a list of at least 21 questions I should like to raise in the course of my

remarks, to—I hope—illustrate the need for the committee to travel, and to illustrate that until now many questions have not been answered by the minister, regardless of the time that has elapsed, and to illustrate that even though the bill has been reintroduced in a revised form there perhaps is still room for improvement.

● (1650)

I think that when the minister reflects upon what happened with regard to the previous bill he will realize that the farmers are not gullible. When he offered them \$100 million in exchange for a release from obligations under the provisions of the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act. They turned that offer down. Farmers cannot be bought with a bribe of that sort, and they are capable of understanding and of providing suggestions for improvement that even the minister will agree are beneficial. The first and foremost reason the committee must travel is that farmers in western Canada do not trust the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lang). They know of his involvement in other areas that affect their lives, and they are always leery, no matter how good an idea might be, that at the back of it there might be something about which they have not been told.

The Minister of Justice, as everyone would agree, works hard and is involved in every aspect of agriculture that might affect the western farmer. Yet one wonders why he has that reputation. It is not because of the type of speech that I or other hon. members usually make, nor is it because of the comments that radio commentators usually make; but it is said that after the minister is through with western farmers, they stand to lose at every turn. When the original western stabilization bill was first proposed, the offer of \$100 million, which at that moment seemed to be an exciting offer, was turned down. Since then we have managed to save \$130 million for the western farmer through the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act.

Let us look at the controversy over the Crowsnest pass agreement and at the comment the minister made on his travels across the country. He made his statement, having formulated a plan, and then told the farmers that he was just testing the waters, that it was his own personal idea. Then there was an exchange between the Premier of Saskatchewan and the Prime Minister of Canada (Mr. Trudeau). Western Canadian farmers want to know why the possibility of doing away with the agreement is even being discussed, and why the minister has taken upon himself the mission of informing western Canadians that this might come about. They are leery because they know how involved and how obstinate this minister can be when it comes to bending from a fixed position.

Even though the Prime Minister has sent a telegram to the Premier of Saskatchewan stating that provided that is what western farmers want, there will be no tampering with the Crowsnest pass agreement. Western farmers feel that there is equivocation there and there is no real assurance that the agreement will not be tampered with. When the minister is involved, these people are deadly afraid of the results. When the minister goes out and tells them that the government will not remove the rail lines, while in actual fact all the plans are in place—according to a speech he made four or five years ago—to have the terminals set up in certain locations and all systems are “go”