

situation is reversed and the participants must make the decision as to whether they want to be out of the program. In addition, that provision to opt out exists only for farmers, as I read the bill, who happen to be engaged in grain farming at the time the act is proclaimed. If you come in later, you have to live with the program. You do not have an option. If you happen to become engaged in grain farming after this legislation is passed, you do not have an option.

One again, under this partly compulsory, partly voluntary measure, if you opt out and then in again, you suffer a penalty. So, it is voluntary in that sense, that is to say, voluntary at a price; and while the price may not amount to a great deal in dollar terms, certainly it detracts from the claim that it is a purely voluntary program. It is not voluntary if you must pay a penalty for exercising your will.

I want to deal for a moment with the fact that people who become involved in grain farming after this bill comes into effect are to have no option. They are to be locked into the program. You know, it is a fact of life that there are certain certainties you must expect when you become involved in farming. You can expect to face drought, rain, and other problems including, I suppose, a special species of pestilence which can be called "Otto's army". If this bill is proclaimed and put into effect, once you get into grain farming you will be subject to the provisions involving the inspections, bureaucracy, and the Liberal party in prairie Canada on wheels, that will flow out of this legislation. You will not have a choice.

● (2040)

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Otto's army worms.

Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain): The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) suggests "Otto's army worms". That is probably a more descriptive phrase. If you get into agriculture after the proclamation of this bill, three things are certain: death, taxes—and Otto Lang. That is a matter to give very serious cause for concern to anyone either considering or engaged in the occupation of grain farming which would make them subject to the bill, once proclaimed.

The third major weakness in the original version of this bill is a weakness which remains. It has to do with the fact that the bill is applicable only across a broad region. Others who have spoken have made the point that in cases where there might be continual poor crops, or in cases such as the Peace River area which might suffer frequently from problems of either drought or too much rain and a loss of crops, this legislation we are now establishing does not come into effect. It comes into effect only if the whole region is affected.

The minister of—I keep forgetting what to call him. It is so improbable that a Minister of Justice should be responsible for this bill. He is the Minister of Justice responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, the grain stabilization bill, and everything else he can get his hands on. In a press release last December he stated that he recognizes there is a weakness in the fact that the bill applies only across the board and does not allow any more specific application. He

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said he would undertake a study on regionalization to see if the bill could be made effective in particular locales that suffer particular problems. However, we have seen no evidence of that study.

The bill is back with the same fault that marked its predecessor. Perhaps we can get the Minister of Agriculture involved in this legislation, at least to the point of carrying a question to his colleague who runs everything. He might ask his colleague what happened to the study into the possibility of regionalization of this program. That is certainly a matter we will want to go into at length during the committee stage.

This is a very serious matter in many parts of the country, including part of my constituency which is liable, to an unusual degree, to crop problems and crop failure. This bill will not be of much help to farmers there if they suffer difficulties which are not shared across the whole of the region. It is a better bill than its predecessor. It has to be because the predecessor inspired such outrage in the agricultural community that it had to be pulled back quickly. However, it still has some faults in that there is only partial indexing, not the complete or fair kind of indexing that allows taking into account all the costs of production faced by grain farmers. There are still several compulsory aspects to membership in the program. There is still the refusal to let it apply to areas which have special problems as well as the requirement that it applies across the board.

I want to deal for a moment with the costs that are involved here and with the size of the staff for the operation that we are establishing. It has been made clear that the contributions of grain farmers will not go into the administrative fund. In other words, Treasury Board is going to meet the administration costs. That, in effect, gives a free hand, a *carte blanche* to the Minister of Justice who is responsible for this bill.

We know from a very unhappy experience how agencies established for apparently limited purposes can grow and grow. We have seen it with the CBC, which has sent more people than most governments to cover the conference of Commonwealth Prime Ministers in the Caribbean. We have seen it with Information Canada, which was established for a particular function which it promptly abandoned. It has continued to grow. We have seen it with several agencies.

There is the very real danger that by providing a kind of *carte blanche* funding from the Treasury Board, not from the program, and without adequate means of scrutiny or any clear indication by the minister as to the dimensions of the staff and cost, this could run into a very expensive venture. That is particularly true when you bear in mind the capacity to build the administrative machinery of this bill into a 1974 version of the Jimmy Gardiner machine. We on this side of the House would be less than frank if we did not express a very real concern that part of the purpose of the Minister of Justice responsible for winning seats in Saskatchewan is to turn the administrative machinery of this bill into a political arm of the Liberal party.

Mr. Nowlan: Like the Senate.