

*Advance Payments for Crops*

I readily admit that in areas where there now exist producer organizations, or organizations consisting primarily of producers, or even in areas where producer organizations can be formed without major difficulty, these organizations are the appropriate bodies to administer and operate this program. I would like to repeat that because I think there might be some misunderstanding among government members as to the thoughts of my colleagues. We support the idea that, where appropriate organizations do exist, these organizations should administer the program.

Surely this minister and this government must realize that their responsibilities extend not just to some producers and not just to most producers, but to all producers. I draw the attention of all hon. members to a portion of the brief of the Ontario Wheat Producers' Marketing Board in which the following is indicated:

Since so few organizations exist that could fit the description, we have questioned whether or not the banks, as defined in the bill, could act as a lending body. We recognize there is a great need for the lending body to be close to the actual marketing functions to administer the loans, but still do not see how some producers are going to be able to avail themselves of the benefits of the legislation.

The Ontario Wheat Board chairman, Mr. Kleiman, went on to support the intent of the proposed amendment by stating the following:

Yes, because most producers deal with banks, we would like to see the opportunity for all producers. As you say, a number are not covered, and one would think all farmers should have equal opportunities.

Those are the words of a well qualified farm leader who heads an organization which, even in its present form, no doubt could participate in this program. However, because of his knowledge, experience, and understanding of the agricultural industry, Mr. Kleiman was quick to point out the problem and, in turn, to offer the obvious solution.

The hon. member for Scarborough East, a member of the government party and a former cabinet minister, said in committee that he would be interested to know whether some lender other than an organization as defined in the bill might not still be a possibility. He said he was encouraged, in the search for an alternative, by the brief of the Ontario Wheat Producers' Marketing Board. In fact the hon. member was encouraged to the extent that he suggested an amendment to the effect that where no organization exists in an area, or some association of producers exists but cannot qualify under the act and where significant amounts of a crop are grown in that area—an area, I repeat, where there is no properly constituted organization—a producer might obtain an advance from an approved lender which is not an organization, provided that the lender enters into an approved form of contract. That is precisely what this amendment provides, and the minister himself indicated the worthiness of such a provision and said he wanted his officials to consider it in greater depth.

It should be noted that in addition to the hon. member for Scarborough East, my hon. friend on the government side, the hon. member for Richelieu (Mr. Coté), has shown his interest and concern about this very same point. My hon. friend, who has been a member of this House for a long time and who has

[Mr. Wise.]

taken an active role in the standing committee, and in all matters dealing with agricultural legislation, expressed a personal desire in committee to see the banks acting as lending agents.

Those who oppose this amendment do so on the presumption that this provision would destroy the orderly marketing thrust in this bill. This objection deserves to be met and discounted. We know, for instance, that there are presently approximately 100 marketing boards, commissions, agencies and producer organizations in various forms. Departmental officials have indicated that 30 to 40 of these are likely in a position now to provide advance payments to their producers, and if we give the government the benefit of the doubt it is possible, after some changes within the remaining organizations, to meet the requirements of the legislations and to provide advance payments to their producers as well.

In all, I think it would be reasonable to assume, in view of what presently exists, and in view of what could take place in the near future, that about 80 per cent of producers of storable crops could have access to advance payments under this bill. Thus it would be fair to assume that the encouragement and development of a more orderly marketing system will be extended to 80 per cent of producers. We think that the impact of such an orderly marketing thrust upon 80 per cent of producers will be no mean achievement. And there is nothing in the amendment before us which would diminish this achievement or undermine the orderly marketing thrust of this bill which, as it stands, will reach only 80 per cent of producers—those producers who belong or can belong to a properly constituted producers' organization. The amendment, Mr. Speaker, concerns itself with the remaining 20 per cent—a significant number of producers who would not be eligible for advance payments simply because they are not represented by an acceptable organization.

● (1720)

The orderly marketing of storable crops is a fine objective, but relief for the individual producer is a far finer objective. This government and this parliament cannot be satisfied with less than making that relief available to every producer in every area, whether he is served by an organization or not. Of course, I realize Mr. Speaker, that in so saying I might run afoul of the Department of Finance which sees the whole question in a different light. The Department of Finance takes the view that the whole philosophy behind the bill is that of accomplishing orderly marketing. According to the Department of Finance there can be no provision for unorganized producers because there is no reason for the government to pay interest if it is not accomplishing something, and if the producers borrow directly from a bank the government would have no reason to pay interest.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, if the Department of Finance thinks that for technical, legal, or other reasons some 20 per cent of producers cannot be accommodated within the scope of this bill, then it should tell us. It has not done so and therefore I take it that there are no such objections. If, on the other