quate. We have done this as part of the government's over all policy of attempting to make sure that farm incomes are adequate. We want to ensure that the farmer obtains a reasonable return for his labour in agriculture from two sources, from the market place, and from the treasury where required, because we are convinced that our agricultural production is important at home and abroad. It is important for our own needs and is important in terms of our obligation to assist others in the world.

We are convinced, as well, that those who are engaged in the production of agricultural products must have, as a result of provincial and federal government policies, adequate returns so that they will be encouraged to produce as effectively as they can. I therefore commend this bill to the House. I hope it will soon move to committee, where it can be further discussed. Without doubt, some of its provisions are complex.

I should like to see the bill become law in time to be operative in 1975. It can be an extremely important form of protection to our grain farmers. It is one further extremely important building block in the protection and assistance we are creating in order to assure the farmers of this country a reasonable income, so that they can earn the kind of livelihood they and their families want. We want to see as many farms as possible continue their existence in this country.

Mr. Benjamin: Madam Speaker, will the minister permit a question? I do not think his time has expired.

Mr. Lang: Yes, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Benjamin: Madam Speaker, the minister said he hopes this bill will move forward quickly. As it was among the six or seven most important bills before the House just before Christmas, and as we have not heard about it until today—it was brought on at three hours' notice—may I ask the minister, once we finish with the bill this evening, how soon will we see it again? When will it be called again?

Mr. Lang: Madam Speaker, the exact ordering of business in this House depends on a number of things. Matters as important as this are sometimes drawn aside by the rather lengthy list of speakers from the opposition.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lang: They are members of the party supported by the hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin), and members of the official opposition. Questions concerning the order of House business should be directed to the government House leader, who is concerned about items which must be dealt with by the House. I am also sure that the agricultural committee is occupied at the moment with the other important stabilization bill before it. I hope this one can soon join the work of that committee, for the good of the prairie region.

● (2140)

Mr. Frank Hamilton (Swift Current-Maple Creek): Madam Speaker, I can certainly agree with the minister that this is a complex bill. There is no way that it can be rushed through the House even though an N.D.P. member says we have been waiting for this bill since last Christmas.

The minister gave us the whole load tonight. He placed a lot of stress on everything that has been done to help the marketing situation as far as western grain is concerned. All I can say is that the minister is making the best of a bad situation because we now have the lowest export position of the past five years. We are some 150 million bushels below two years ago.

The Western Producer of April 17, in a black border on the front page, headlines "Grain Marketing at Five-year Low". I quote from the article.

> For the crop year to date both the marketings of grain and oil-seeds by Canadian farmers as well as the total exports stand at the lowest levels since the 1969-1970 crop year, according to official notices.
>
> Latest reports from the Canadian Grain Commission indicate farmers marketings at 388.3 million bushels for the crop year to date, the lowest for this 35-week period since 1969-70.
>
> Likewise, total exports to date in this crop year—314.1 million bushels—represent the lowest volume for this period since 1969-70.

One of the first things we must question is why the minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board is introducing this bill rather than the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan). The Canadian Wheat Board Act stipulates that the objectives and powers of the wheat board are confined to only that of a marketing role. This bill deals with six principal grains, three of which are not under the jurisdiction of the Canadian Wheat Board.

The purpose of Bill C-41 is to provide for stabilization of the net proceeds from the production and sale of western grain, and to protect the producer from the ups and downs of the prices and the quantities that move into commercial market.

It is generally conceded that by confining ourselves to practical farming methods already used by the good farmers in different parts of the world, the world's cultivated and pasture lands could feed something like ten times our present population; not at a subsistence level but on a Canadian style of diet. They can do this if the profit incentive for farmers to take the risk inherent in agriculture and to increase their output and productivity is not limited by the actions of government.

To be very certain that we have a clearer understanding of the effects of this bill, it will be necessary to look at all aspects of it. The hope is to find ways for improvement, so the first question we have to ask is: do we really need this new scheme for western grain at this time, or is there some alternative course that we should take?

The concept may be valid and it may be needed for products such as eggs, fruit, and Ontario corn, and potatoes, but will it be administrable for grain without creating a bureaucratic structure that could overwhelm us? Will the existing PFAA group be the base upon which stabilization will rise? It is not the concept of the grain stabilization plan that is complex and unattractive. It is the operational and administrative features that require understanding.

In its notes on the western grain stabilization working paper put out by the government, it seems that the main selection criteria used was the cheapest plan for a given level of stability, and a plan that is actuarially sound. It is stated on page 11 of that booklet that the net cash flow