

Prairie Grain Stabilization Act

agriculture. I could refer to all the items in this area, which total about \$300 million. Compare that with farmers' net income and appreciate that their net income, almost in total in the Prairie region, results directly from action taken by this government.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lang: Reference has been made to approximately \$60 million which has been paid out under the Lift program. An hon. member noted that this was not as much as farmers could have obtained if they had taken greater advantage of the scheme. We knew the Lift program was a difficult plan and that it made unusual demands upon farmers, but we were also aware that it was a means of placing additional cash income into their hands. We hoped this would amount to about \$100 million, though in fact the amount disbursed was in the neighbourhood of \$60 million. I would remind hon. members that \$40 million has now been set aside in connection with a forage incentive program. Opposition speakers ignored this completely when considering the commitment of the government to agriculture.

I should also remind the House of the \$10 million per year set aside for market development, confirming our view that market development is the key to future solution of most of the problems of prairie agriculture. We do not know at this time the circumstances in which farmers may find themselves in years ahead. We shall always have to watch the situation carefully and we cannot rest on the assumption that any particular plan or set of plans is in itself adequate.

I have pledged that we will continue to watch the income situation. We must first of all promote sales in every possible way and then judge to what extent the pursuit of sales may have helped farmers to better their position. On the sales front, this year exports of grain have totalled 442.2 million bushels, 60 per cent higher than the 280.8 million bushels at the same time a year ago. Wheat exports are 29 per cent up, sales of barley are at record levels and exports of rapeseed have doubled. New records have been set in each case. This is not just a matter of comparing one year with the previous year; there is every prospect that this year exports of grain will reach an all-time record level.

We do not know at this stage how prairie farmers will stand as to income if for some years we can maintain or expand this kind of selling picture and allow producers to be as effective as they know how to be, but were not able to be as long as grain was not moving.

I was particularly perturbed by the misleading statement made in this House at the beginning of the debate by the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski), who I regret is not in the chamber now. Referring to a Wheat Board report, he indicated that many of our customers were in default on their commitments to buy grain from us. So serious is this kind of misstatement—many similar misstatements have been made in the course of this debate—that the Wheat Board found it necessary to put out a correction, drawing attention to the fact that, as was made clear in the report, only one of

our customers was in default and that the others were taking grain in accordance with the agreements signed. The board was most concerned lest misleading statements of this kind might damage our position in the eyes of buyers and potential buyers. Such a statement should surely not be made before the facts have been determined.

Proposals have been made to the effect that net income should be taken as the basis for determining contributions to the stabilization fund. The difficulty here lies in finding a formula which would determine net income fairly and determine it with all the variations which exist from farm to farm, from district to district, from individual to individual. It is impossible to determine net income in a way which would not penalize the good farmer as compared with the average farmer. The truth is that the gross receipts basis in one which allows the individual farmer who can do better in terms of his farming operations to do better, as well, in terms of the marketing operation and the stabilization fund.

This is a principle which will, I think, commend itself to the free enterprisers on the Prairies, the farmers who are in fact maintaining, at some income cost, their ability to stand on their own feet and be their own masters. I look forward to this important measure finding speedy passage through the committee as it has through the House of Commons, so that we may take this significant step as part of our total package of proposals to help the interest of the prairie grain farmer.

• (3:50 p.m.)

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?

Mr. Baldwin: On division.

Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Agriculture.

Mr. Jerome: Mr. Speaker, if we might call it four o'clock, there has been agreement that in private members' hour today we will proceed with Bill C-47, which stands in the name of the hon. member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Skoberg). If the House agrees, we could call it four o'clock and commence private members' business.

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, we would be willing to call it four o'clock. I am sure that the minister who will be opening the debate on the next bill is exhausted after his efforts to muster argument to support the last bill, so we would be prepared to let it go.

Mr. Barnett: Mr. Speaker, if agreement is arrived at I take it you will be seeing five o'clock a little before five o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: It is so agreed. Private members' business will extend for one hour from this moment.

It being four o'clock or less, the House will proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper, namely, public bills, notices of motions, private bills.

[Mr. Lang.]