

Government Orders

free, that they would feel as unfettered as possible to make decisions with respect to either getting into GRIP or staying out of GRIP.

While I am on this matter of costs, there is something else I want to raise. Many months ago when GRIP and NISA were being envisaged—and I will speak now only of GRIP—there was talk that the premiums for the three parties—that is, the provincial governments, the federal government and the producers—would run at about 18 per cent, that is 18 per cent of return. That 18 per cent would be split evenly, 6 per cent each way.

However, it is not working out that way. In fact, if you look at Saskatchewan alone, Saskatchewan premiums are going to run at about 12 per cent, 12.5 per cent. That is about 100 per cent more; in other words, double the provincial premium that was envisaged just a few months ago. That is a concern to us.

You have to ask yourself the questions: Are those kinds of increases sustainable? Are those kinds of premiums sustainable? If you can have that kind of premium going up 100 per cent even before the program starts, what is it going to be like a year from now? What is it going to be like two years from now, or three years from now? Those are questions that we have to raise now and, in particular, we have to raise those questions at committee.

• (1550)

While we are at it we might as well raise questions about the deficit. The hon. Minister of Agriculture pointed out in his speech this morning that at the outset, at the beginning of GRIP, there will be a deficit.

The hon. minister says that the program is actuarially sound and the time will come when everything will even out, that there will not be a terrible deficit. I hope he is right, but there are some people around who say that the way it is set up, the way it is currently constituted it cannot fly. It just cannot fly. Those are questions that we are going to have to raise at committee.

Remember one thing, despite all these concerns we do look at GRIP and NISA as a lifeline for farmers. I think that we have a responsibility, an obligation to farmers to throw out to them a lifeline, to help them over the hump, and to help them through this very troubled

period. Farmers have been devastated by what has been going on in world markets. This world trade war is crazy. It is an abomination. I think we have an obligation to help farmers through. Farm safety programs are not the ultimate panacea but we have to help farmers through this difficult period.

In the first year of GRIP the estimated pay-out is \$2.4 billion. That is a lot of money and the government certainly has gone out of its way to emphasize the amount of money, \$2.4 billion. Let us put this thing in perspective. In just the last couple of years, this government has slashed \$1.8 billion from agricultural support programs.

In effect, on one hand the government is saying: "Look at how great we are. We have arranged a program that will pay out \$2.4 billion". Yet on the other hand, I think it is responsible on our part to remind people of the serious cuts that took place in agricultural support programs in just the last couple of years.

Forgive me, Mr. Speaker, but I must at least for a moment succumb to a moderate bout of cynicism. My cynicism relates to the GRIP payments. It does not take a genius to notice that the GRIP payments more or less will come on stream in 1992 and there will be perhaps another major GRIP payment in early 1993. What is so significant about 1992 and what is so significant about 1993? Look at the parliamentary calendar. My reading of the parliamentary calendar tells me that we might have a federal election in 1992 or early 1993. Would it not be very propitious for our good friends across the way to be sending off, through Canada Post, some big fat cheques to producers at just about the time they are asking themselves: "Who should we vote for". It would be very propitious.

I am sure that did not dawn on my good friend, the agricultural minister. If it did come to him, it must have come to him second hand. In any event, I took note of that.

If you think that this cynicism that I am exhibiting is just pulled out of the sky, it is not. We saw this happen back in 1987 and 1988. Under the Special Grains Program we saw huge dollops of money being handed out to farmers. What happened in 1988? We had a federal election.