

Prairie Grain Stabilization Act

We have that. Then, there is this statement:

The federal government should pay for all saleable grains in order to have a storage reserve and to reduce costs to the farmer.

That must mean that the federal government should pay all the storage costs on saleable grain. Then, the statement continues:

Capital gains, estate taxes and succession duties should not be permitted to break up viable family farms, nor should capital gains deprive a farmer of his retirement income.

Those statements are very important when one considers the over-all aspects of the grain stabilization program and the eradication of the farmers. As I was saying, the name of the game in this whole series of farm legislation is the removal of the small scale farmer. If we look back at the Winnipeg speech of June 7 we will see that the Prime Minister had a specific policy for the operators of small farms. He said this:

While the situation varies from commodity to commodity, in general 30 per cent of Canada's farmers produce 70 per cent of our agricultural production. This great variation in farm size and with it productivity renders the development of agricultural programs appropriate to varying farm sizes most difficult. The problem could be met through the institution of a system of farm differentiation by productivity and size. This differentiation could provide a basis for modifying programs to meet the particular needs of farms of different sizes.

He continues:

In return for the differentiation level of assistance the smaller farmer could undertake that at the time the farm passed from his possession he would not dispose of it for other than farm consolidation or for movement into the public sector. Thus the special programs designed for farmers in this category would not perpetuate the problem.

When we look at that statement, we realize that no owner of a small farm can pass on his farm to his son. He must pass it on to a neighbour or to the government. These are the conclusions one must arrive at from reading this speech. Certainly, that statement differs markedly from the original Liberal policy which was suggested that the capital gains tax, estate tax and succession duties should not be permitted to break up the viable family farm. The policy proposed in this bill is directly contrary to the views expressed at the last Liberal convention.

Let us look at the grain stabilization program. When was it first proposed? It was proposed on October 29, 1970 in this House. When it was first proposed, the minister complained about opposition members of all parties holding up farm legislation. If this program is so necessary and so acceptable to the farm population, where has the minister kept it from October 29? The next we saw of it was the first reading of the bill on April 29, 1971, six months later. Mr. Speaker, amendments are proposed to many pieces of legislation asking that they be not now read a second time but read a second time six months hence. Nobody suggested that that be done with this bill, but the minister, in effect, has done so himself.

• (4:20 p.m.)

Since then, the minister has followed certain procedures. He has bombarded the Prairie farmers with at

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least four or five pamphlets advertising this program, seeking feedback, and wanting to know how to change and modify it. Then, on March 15 he did modify it to some extent. On that date he said the federal government would make a contribution which would be twice the size of the contribution made by the farmer. He did not say that on October 29. But then he began to get the feedback, and so he made the change. Then, the minister had to tag on another \$100 million as a temporary measure. He admits that this is an one-shot program, but I think he will agree that, in contrast, the stabilization program is a long-term measure. What have the two in common? This makes one wonder. Why tie them together in one bill? All along the minister has been attempting to devise some way to smooth the passage of this bill through the House and through the committee.

The minister has been attempting to persuade the farmers that he is right. He did not bring the bill before the elected representatives of the farmers because he was aware that they were knowledgeable of the legislative processes. They know what the provisions of the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act mean to the farmer. The minister deliberately refused to allow these representatives to debate the bill until he had received enough feedback and had changed it to the point where he thought he could pilot it through the House. It took the minister six months to get the feedback, six months to try to convince the farmers that they should accept this program. Now, to the surprise of many, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture—and in this case I think the primary influence would have been the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool—says the grain stabilization program is no good, that it won't benefit the farmers at all, and that in fact it will put them in a straitjacket.

This bill, coupled with a lot of other government legislation, is an attempt to remove the government's commitment to the agricultural industry. The government does not want to give any subsidies to that industry. The government feels it can best arrive at this solution by taking control from the farmers. When that stage is reached the government will tell the farmers, "We will manage your business. You plant what we tell you to plant, and take off what we tell you to take off. Then, we won't have to give you any subsidy." The aim is nothing less than state control of the agricultural industry. I suppose this all stems from the Prime Minister's famous query to the wheat farmers of western Canada, at a time when he did not know any better. He asked them, "Why should I sell your wheat?" When he found out that he had this responsibility, then he said to himself, "I had better control the industry so that the farmers won't produce a surplus, because I have other things to do; I have a whole world to see, and to see seven times over. I cannot be concerned with these mundane problems of the farmers. They are becoming less and less a political influence as time goes on, and the more of them we can get off the land the less a political influence they will be."

How does this attitude compare with what other governments are doing for their agricultural industries? Last fall, speaking to the Agricultural Congress, the Minister