

in the interests of western grain producers. We waited a considerable time for this second reading debate, because the bill was not introduced until December 4 of last year and has now only been brought forward for second reading; therefore, I hope the minister has no intention of having this legislation become effective before seeding begins. Under the circumstances, that is very unlikely.

Mr. Goodale: It is still snowing.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: I realize it is still snowing in Assiniboia.

An hon. Member: It has been snowing there since July 8.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: I would not go so far as to say that. I want to deal with some of the provisions of Bill C-41, "an Act respecting the stabilization of net proceeds from the production and sale of western grain and to amend certain statutes in consequence thereof." That is possibly the shortest sentence in the bill. It reminds me of another rather infamous act on our statute books, the Income Tax Act. Anyone who reads these two pieces of legislation will understand that we humble western farmers are going to have a very difficult time interpreting this incredibly complex piece of legislation.

An hon. Member: That's humility!

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Humility comes naturally to any westerner. I am glad to see two or three Liberal members of the agriculture committee sitting in the back row. We should give particular attention to this bill because there is still considerable uncertainty in the minds of western grain producers with regard to the operation of the legislation. Since it was first suggested that this bill should be reintroduced in this session of parliament, it has been my contention that it should receive very close examination by the Standing Committee on Agriculture.

I support the suggestion that has been made by the hon. member for Wetaskiwin (Mr. Schellenberger), the hon. member for Lisgar (Mr. Murta) and the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski), that the agriculture committee should take this bill to the grain producers in western Canada. The western grain producers sometimes feel a certain remoteness from people in Ottawa. I feel it would have a therapeutic effect if the members of the agriculture committee travelled to those people as opposed to having only those who can afford to come to Ottawa presenting their points of view. This type of legislation requires input from western grain producers. It must be explained to the man on the farm. It is imperative that the members of the agriculture committee travel out west. In addition to seeing some of God's country, they can explain this bill and receive opinions as to whether the western producers feel it can operate in their best interests.

Reference was made by the hon. member for Wetaskiwin to some of the background of this legislation. I was not here the first time this bill was introduced. Initially, there was an attempt to bring forward a stabilization bill with respect to western grain under the so-called prairie grain stabilization act. The bill was withdrawn because, as has been pointed out many times, there were some fairly

Western Grain Stabilization

substantial objections to its terms. It has also been pointed out that this opposition has been somewhat allayed by improvements to the bill.

● (1630)

Notwithstanding this, questions have been raised. I am in receipt of communications from constituents and producer groups pointing out that there are still substantial questions to be taken into account. For this reason, the agriculture committee is likely to be called upon to spend a fairly long time considering the legislation before us today. In my opinion, this is an inopportune time to be launching upon this work, to be carrying out an inquiry and inviting witnesses to come forward. We know that seeding time is just beginning in western Canada; the farmers whom this measure concerns will be on the land; they will not have time to make representations with respect to these proposals. The legislation should have been introduced last October at the beginning of the session. It should have been debated on second reading then, and put forward for consideration by the agriculture committee so that there might have been an opportunity during the winter months to canvass the ideas of those who are directly affected.

Mr. Lang: Would the hon. member permit a question? I should like to ask whether he is aware that the reason for the delay in the introduction of the bill was the extensive consultations which were going on with the various farm organizations and our desire to incorporate positive suggestions into the bill. I hope the hon. member agrees that this was a desirable thing to do.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: I appreciate the point the minister has made in the guise of a question, and I accept his sincerity when he says he has been trying to obtain suggestions from producer groups. But that still does not explain the delay. There was no smile on the minister's face when he made the promise that the legislation would be introduced within the first seven days of the new session. Those were the minister's words. It was the minister who said the legislation would be introduced almost as soon as we got back to this chamber. Instead, we have waited until seeding time on the prairies, and parliament is apparently being asked to rush the bill through. I think this is bad timing on the minister's part.

The hon. member for Wetaskiwin commented on the fact that it is the minister in charge of the Wheat Board who is in charge of this legislation. The primary aim of the stabilization bill is to even out the income of grain producers. Some may contend that the aim is to stabilize the industry; but the industry is composed of people and it is the farmers who will receive financial benefit. It is, therefore, questionable whether the minister responsible for the Wheat Board should be the minister in charge of this bill. The Wheat Board legislation does not deal with the incomes of farmers. The role of the Wheat Board is, essentially, a marketing role and its powers are defined accordingly.

I could go over the provisions covering the powers of the Wheat Board; those sections and subsections refer to marketing concepts, marketing powers. They are quite distinct from the concepts dealt with in the legislation before us. It