

Western Grain Stabilization

financing ratio involving the government and the taxpayers' money. Why is the compulsory feature necessary?

The various formulae required will be a major factor in selling the bill to farmers. Can it really be explained to farmers? Will the bookkeeping requirements be so immense that farmers will give up before getting started? The requirements are a bit scary to me. What bothers the farmer is not so much the detail of keeping his books, but the matter of personal liberty infringement. No matter how often you assure the farmer that his books are not for public inspection and that no other use will be made of them, he is inherently suspicious of what use might be made of those records that he is required to keep.

One other failing relates to the producer of feed grains who is feeding them to his own cattle or hogs. Up until this time there is no provision for these grains to be included for the contributions. This feature is reported to be taken care of in the livestock stabilization plan, but so far I am not aware of this provision being allowed. This surely must be recognized. We must realize what a high percentage of feed grains are fed right on the farm and never go through the formal market, or a formal pricing agency on the prairies.

● (1550)

In concluding these remarks I should like once again to refer to two aspects which are of particular importance to me as the representative for Medicine Hat. First, I would stress the need for more attention to be given to the recognition of the hazard of drought. Some form of regional approach is obviously required. It has become evident that crop insurance is not the answer in the case of farmers who are exposed to extreme drought hazards. The premiums necessary to insure against them are so high that farmers would prefer to accept the risk.

The other point I want to emphasize is that surely the topic we are debating today, along with the agriculture stabilization bill presently in committee, should be taken to the farmers in the Wheat Board area of western Canada. Farmers should be allowed to appear in person, or through smaller organizations attend public meetings, hear explanations, and tell it like it is.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): The hon. member for Grenville-Carleton.

Mr. Lang: Well, well!

An hon. Member: Farming in the Green Belt!

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I have listened carefully to the debate in the last two days, and I hope the cries of derision when a member from Ontario stands up to discuss a bill which relates basically to western agriculture do not indicate that those members concerned, who come from various parts of the country, feel in their hearts that the prosperity of western farming has nothing to do with the prosperity of our country as a whole. I believe, as do many other people, whether they are directly connected with the industry or not, that agriculture is of the greatest importance to the future of our country and, indeed, to the future of the world.

What could be more important than the continuance in the bread basket of the world, of which Canada is one, of a strong and progressive grain growing capacity? The debate ought not to be limited, in my judgment, to those who have the honour to represent wheat producing areas. There is nothing which happens in the agricultural industry which, ultimately, does not affect us all.

We all know this to be true in the case of the oil industry whose affairs have occupied the House lately for a good many days. Attention is now being drawn to the natural gas industry, because suddenly what we have regarded for so long as an inexpensive fuel is becoming an expensive fuel for us. So we realize that what happens in one part of the country can deeply affect the lifestyle, the quality of life, and industrial progress in other parts of the nation.

Sometimes it seems to me that a failing among Canadians is the tendency to think too much along regional lines when we ought to be thinking of the nation as a whole. When I listen to my hon. friend from Medicine Hat, my hon. friend from Crowfoot, and others, and even to members on the other side when they decide to speak on agriculture from time to time, I do so with great respect because the agricultural industry is the foundation stone of progress in this country.

We are dealing today with a complicated piece of legislation. When I considered speaking on this bill I read it through from one end to the other and, having done so, I must say I shared the view expressed by my hon. friend from Don Valley that it is one of the most difficult bills with which we have been faced in the thirtieth parliament. This does not surprise me very much because its proponent is one of the most complicated and difficult ministers we have faced in this parliament.

I am sure that something as fundamental as this could not possibly be done in a more complicated way unless, instead of one lawyer looking after wheat in Canada there were two. It is an interesting thing—when you bring together a lawyer, a former law school dean, a Queen's Counsel, a Minister of Justice and put a plough in his hands, he does not know how to run it. The great difficulty he will encounter with respect to this bill will be to explain it to the agricultural community.

If the laws of the country are to mean anything, they should be understandable by the person who is engaged in the field. This applies equally to the thrust of government policy—not necessarily understandable by the druggist or by the teacher, but certainly by the farmer—and here I am thinking specifically of the bill before us. I am beginning to wonder whether the minister, with all his reputed wisdom, took this into due account and whether, with all his skills, he is likely to be able to establish in the minds of those who are intimately engaged in agriculture what this bill means, how it will operate, and what the benefits will be.

May I call it four o'clock, Madam Speaker?

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): It being four o'clock the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper, namely, notices of motions, public bills, and private bills.