

*Government Orders*

two acts—the Western Grain Advance Payments Act and the Advance Payments for Crops Act.

Let us put this in perspective. I am not suggesting that we pass the bill without debate. What I am suggesting is: when I listened to the debate yesterday in the House and I read parts of *Hansard* from Tuesday, this is not really opposition in terms of real genuine debate. It is simply opposition for the sake of opposition. Let us get it out of the House on second reading, get it to committee, and get the process under way, as opposed to putting up member after member who are reading speeches that are put in front of them and do not know anything about the bill. That is what is going on.

If the opposition is interested, let us conclude the debate today, right now, get it to committee as quickly as we can, call witnesses, and go ahead and proceed with the legislation. Then farmers will have available to them cash advances. Admittedly they are going to have to pay interest on it, but also they are going to have more cash advances as far as dollars are concerned because we are raising the limits. That is what we should be doing, instead of having this mindless opposition simply for the sake of opposition.

**Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Prince Edward—Hastings):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to say at the outset that the minister has made the statement in the last few minutes that we on this side of the House do not understand the bill and made the accusation that we do not understand agriculture. I would like to challenge that statement.

**Mr. Mayer:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I did not say that the opposition does not understand agriculture. That is not what I said at all. I said that some hon. members during the debate that I heard yesterday did not understand this bill. They were obviously reading from a prepared text but on a personal basis did not understand this bill. So let us be clear on the points that I just made.

**Mr. Vanclief:** Mr. Speaker, I will tell the minister what I wanted to tell him. I also resent the fact that the accusation is being made that we are intentionally holding up the bill. I can tell the minister that I came to the House to partake in constructive criticism. I do understand the bill and I feel that I have that right and will take advantage of that right to make that construc-

tive criticism. That is the vein in which we are speaking on this bill.

We know what the purpose of the bill has been. We know what will be the effects of the amendments that the government is proposing. In effect, the bill is going to gut the use of the act for many of the producers who have used it in the past. It will no longer be useful to them as the management tool it has been in the past.

• (1150)

We know that as far as the ministry is concerned the purpose of the bill is to save some \$25 million to \$27 million. This on the backs of the farmers who have used those programs. Later I will outline for the minister and challenge him to show me many other programs where investment by the government has returned many fold on the investment it has made by paying the interest on this loan.

I cannot believe what I have seen happening in the last few months I have had the privilege of being in this House as far as the gutting of many agricultural programs is concerned. This is just another one. Farmers are asking me daily and weekly: "What is going to be done to us next? We were told we had protection under Article 11 and those words are still there". In the last week or two the dairy farmers have lost a lot of confidence. They need to be reassured. The pork producers have lost a lot of confidence and now the grain farmers and vegetable and fruit farmers are saying: "Here goes another tool that we used. What is next?"

Farmers need all the financial management tools that they can possibly get in their hand. They get very unsettled and very depressed when they see them being taken away from them.

I would just like to ask a few questions and then discuss some answers in reference to Bill C-36.

First, has this program been a good investment of tax dollars? I think it has. The relative cost of the program has been minimal compared to the benefits it has generated. We have heard the figures from the Ontario Corn Producers. The minister says that only 536 of the Ontario Corn Producers use the program. But what is wrong with only 536 using the program? The Ontario Corn Producers say that probably very few of them will use the program in the future if the minister gets his way in charging interest on this.