

*Prairie Grain Stabilization Act*

before us are very important and relate to the most essential parts of this bill. As the hon. member for Regina East (Mr. Burton) said, they really get down to the core of the bill, or what you might call the more controversial parts of this legislation.

We are not just dealing with a short-term measure or something that will have an effect for a few months or a year or two. It is something that will have many long-term ramifications, not only for the farmer but for the people who live in small towns, villages and even small cities in constituencies such as mine. Cities of the size of Yorkton, with 15,000 people, are directly influenced in almost every way by what happens to the farm economy. People in constituencies such as mine are very interested in what happens to a bill such as this. They are interested in the amendments we propose in an attempt to make the bill as realistic as possible.

This bill was referred to perhaps more often than anything else during the six or seven weeks I spent in my constituency during the summer recess. Nearly everyone in that area is concerned about it. The hon. member for Saskatoon-Humboldt (Mr. Lang), the minister in charge of the Wheat Board, has suggested that we stop filibustering and pass the bill so the farmers can get the \$100 million. I wish this bill were that simple, and I am sure the farmers share that wish. They all want and need their share of the \$100 million.

Almost all the farm organizations are suggesting that we split this bill and pass the clause dealing with the \$100 million immediately. I think everyone in the House is unanimously agreed in that regard. However, when we study the rest of the bill clause by clause and consider its most crucial points, we find that in the opinion of most farmers it will do more to hinder them than to help them. Most farmers believe that if this bill is passed in its present form it will stabilize their income at the poverty level rather than augment their income as it should be doing. Most farmers, regardless of their standing on the political ideological scale, are opposed to this bill. Most of them have asked us to do everything we can to get the minister to listen to their representations and make basic changes such as those suggested in motions Nos. 1 and 2.

Many people feel that factors such as the cost of production should be taken into consideration in the stabilization bill. Many farm leaders and agricultural economists, who know more about agriculture than most of us here in the House, say this bill does not take into account factors such as the cost of production. This is probably difficult for those in the House who are not familiar with farming operations to comprehend. The cost of operating a farm goes up and down like a yo-yo each year because of the many indeterminable factors. In many parts of Saskatchewan this year there was an invasion of the Bertha army worm. This, in itself, has cost the people of that province many hundreds of thousands of dollars. Things of this kind have to be taken into account when we are discussing a bill of this sort.

Another thing that is directly involved, as most people see it, is the fact that this may mean a first step toward introducing the recommendations of the task force on agriculture. If we stabilize farm income, as this bill attempts to do, we will be expediting the exodus of many people from the rural areas. This measure is certainly not

[Mr. Nystrom.]

going to help the low, average or middle income farmer, those people who are just eking out an existence on the farm.

In essence, this bill presents a test to this minister in that the government has been saying for a long time it believes in participatory democracy. If there were participatory democracy and the government listened to the representations of farmers and their organizations it would change this bill immediately. It could do so by accepting the two amendments proposed by my colleague, the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar. This would take into account the cost of production.

It is not often that farm organizations are unanimous. The Canadian Federation of Agriculture, the Farmers Union, the wheat pools and others are basically different in ideology, and most have different interpretations in respect of major farm issues before the country. Most of them have different suggestions as to how to solve farm problems. All of these organizations, the Farmers Union, the Federation of Agriculture and the wheat pools in Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba, as well as the United Grain Growers, are unanimous in their feeling that this bill is not good enough, and that it should be studied and changed. There was a conference two days ago of the ministers of agriculture from the three prairie provinces. Even though they come from different political backgrounds, they were unanimous in their opposition to this bill as it stands. This is another reason for the government to change the form of this bill as it stands before the House today.

We are not opposed to the stabilization of farm income as a result of a measure that takes into account the cost of production and net income rather than gross income. This would benefit the producer. Such a measure would be of assistance to farmers and would allow them to stay on the farm. We are not opposed to the principle, but we do oppose a bill such as this which will probably hinder rather than help the majority of farmers.

The debate on this bill provides us with an opportunity of deciding whether this minister and his government really mean what they say about participatory democracy. Democracy is more than just an odd election, and it is more than just listening to people occasionally. A real democracy is one in which the people are involved. It means accepting ideas and putting them into legislation and into practice. In this way the people can play a real part in making decisions that affect their own lives. The farmers are unanimous in this regard and they have expressed a consensus through their farm organization representatives.

When we go back home to our constituencies we are constantly reminded that this bill contains an element of blackmail. The government has \$100 million that the farmers want and need, and it says that once the stabilization bill is passed the farmers will get that \$100 million. Regardless of politics, is it not time that this type of tactic was abandoned in Canada? We should stop holding out bribes to entice people to accept the things they do not want. This is a genuine and sincere feeling being expressed by the people on the farms back home in Saskatchewan.