

defence that one cannot rightfully accuse him of being the father of the stabilization program; he is merely a servant trying to carry out the policy.

It is very important that we understand how this situation came about. The program was dreamed up. This minister is merely trying to carry it out. Let us take consider how he is attempting to carry it out. The minister's basic purpose in carrying out this program is his desire to serve the Prime Minister and the ministry. It is regrettable that he does not have greater desire to serve the farmers of Saskatchewan. I cannot change that fact; I have to accept the fact that he feels his primary purpose is to serve the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister said, "Carry out the program which I announced on June 2, 1968. Forget about the farmers and forget about the people of Saskatchewan."

The people of Saskatchewan fully understand the situation. There was recently an agricultural conference held in Regina, attended by the three prairie Ministers of Agriculture. They all regretted the actions of the federal government. The farmers have repeatedly stated that they regret the actions of the federal government. In this debate an hon. member stated that he had received 4,200 letters from people who regret this particular action. It is obvious that the minister has disregarded the views of the farmer and has decided to serve the government first.

It is always regrettable when the ministry decides it is the master, not the people, and tells the people what they are going to receive, rather than the people telling the government what they desire. That fact is vividly illustrated in this legislation. It has also been pointed out on a number of previous occasions. We have frequently seen the government adopt this attitude.

In all fairness, the minister has attempted to sell this program rather well. I say to the other ministers in the cabinet—if the Prime Minister were here he could bear witness to what I am saying—that the minister has attempted to sell this program rather well. He did not go about it in the way in which the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) tried to slide in Bill C-176. In a moment of crisis and urgency that minister tried to slide in a major piece of marketing legislation which would bring about a great deal of control and rigidity in our agricultural system.

The minister responsible for the Wheat Board went about selling the concept of the government's plan in a very good way. On April 29 he announced in Parliament that the grain stabilization program was being proposed. It looked good. The Federation of Agriculture, the Farmers Union, the grain companies and all political parties studied it throughout the winter months. They have all rejected it. The Canada Grains Council have great fears about it. Mr. Runciman, chairman of the Canada Grains Council which was set up to advise the government, said to the members of the Standing Committee on Agriculture, as recorded in issue No. 58 of the Committee's proceedings, that at best the program would be a long-range one and would not help in the short range or in a temporary situation.

There is no secret about the situation in agriculture today. As I explained before the supper hour, there is an immediate problem. To use a shopworn phrase, the

farmer is caught in the cost-price squeeze. That is certainly true today because the price of wheat has gone down while costs of production have gone up.

• (8:10 p.m.)

The minister, in his attempt to sell this program, initiated a debate on October 29. He did not bring in this piece of legislation until April; I think it was April 23. I would say this was where he made his mistake. He should have brought in his program in February. At that point the farmers, the wheat pools, the Federation of Agriculture and perhaps even the Farmers Union might have been prepared to give him the benefit of the doubt and to go along with it. But he waited too long.

It is a question of timing. It has been said over the years that the art of politics is the art of timing. I think the minister failed badly in his timing. Had he brought this program in in February he would not have found himself in the difficulty which confronts him now under the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act, when he finds that \$87.6 million are owing and should be paid.

I for one have little faith in this stabilization program but I am prepared to pass it provided the minister pays his debts.

An hon. Member: A little more than that.

Mr. Horner: An hon. member to my left says, "A little more than that." I would like to see a little more than that, it is true, but I am considered a moderate. I want the government to understand that we are prepared to negotiate. We are prepared to help the government help the farmer. There may be big headlines about the minister being prepared to go to jail. I am sure that many farmers in western Canada wish he had been in jail for the last six months. If he had been in jail maybe they would have got 15 cents a bushel more for their wheat.

There is no question that the amendments before the House deal with specific aspects of the minister's program. They ask that his proposals be worked out on the basis of net income rather than gross sales. Everyone concerned should bear in mind that farmers have a margin of 13 per cent of their gross sales on which to live. Now the government is proposing to take 2 per cent of the gross, which is like taking 5 or 6 per cent of the net income since farmers live on 13 per cent of their gross sales. The Bureau of Statistics can check these figures. My analysis suggests that eastern farmers live on 14 per cent of their gross sales and western farmers on 13 per cent, but I lump both groups together and say that this measure calls on farmers to pay something like 5 per cent of their net income.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but his time has expired. The hon. member knows he cannot continue unless he receives unanimous consent. Does the House give its consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Horner: I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and express my appreciation for the generous mood of the House. It is, I think, well known that I have not abused the rules of the House of Commons, and I assure Your Honour and mem-