

*Western Grain Stabilization*

government. Certainly the structures that were established to deal with agricultural problems and that were evolved to deal with agricultural policy should not be shaped simply to suit one man's ambition. There should be a much more rational inspiration behind the development of agricultural policy in this country than is presently the case with the Minister of Justice reaching out for everything he can grasp.

There is no rational reason for having this bill introduced in the name of, and proceed under the direction of, the Minister of Justice. Yet we are building into the legislation a reliance on Wheat Board proceedings. We are building in, by having the Minister of Justice responsible for this agency, the suggestion that there will be a continuing relationship between this program, which has to do with the incomes of grain farmers, and the Wheat Board, which to this point and under the act, has had to do exclusively with the marketing of grain products. There is no rational reason for that. The simple reason is that it happens to serve the interests of a particularly ambitious and influential minister.

The problem is that strong though the Minister of Justice may be, he is not going to be there always, and the program and legislation we are designing at this time will almost certainly endure after the minister has gone. The structures we are establishing will almost certainly have to be dealt with by Canadian farmers after this particular minister has gone; yet we are establishing structures and evolving a policy shaped simply to serve the ambitions of a transitory minister. I think that ought to be a matter of concern to all of us.

I must admit that perhaps one of the reasons why this bill has not been sponsored by the Minister of Agriculture, who has always identified himself in this House and elsewhere as being a simple farmer, is that he cannot understand it. We sympathize with him. Even my distinguished legal colleague from Saskatoon-Biggar expressed a certain difficulty in understanding the complexities of this legislation. The complexities of formulas set out in Bill C-41 make the filling out of income tax forms seem relatively easy.

This is complicated legislation and leads me to suspect that the Minister of Justice, who is responsible for the Wheat Board, harbours some continuing interest in the job prospects of the graduates of the law school of the University of Saskatchewan. Certainly, he is introducing here a piece of legislation which will keep them busy for a long time to come, as farmers try to figure out how to deal with this legislation and what it means. It is a bonanza for lawyers, but it may turn out to be something considerably less for grain farmers. It will also keep several other groups busy, too, because this legislation in all its complexity cannot possibly be carried out without a substantial bureaucracy. Clearly, tonight, in considering Bill C-41, we are being invited to establish an even greater bureaucracy to deal with this complex legislation.

As I said earlier, the concept inspiring this bill was first introduced in parliament in 1970, and was given second reading in 1971. The bill then before the House received such universal criticism and condemnation that it was simply battered down by public opinion. There was overwhelming, universal opposition by farm spokesmen,

[Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain).]

individual farmers and members representing agricultural regions in this country, and for those reasons, because of the extensive opposition, the government withdrew the predecessor bill. There were three features of that predecessor bill which were particularly objectionable. One was its compulsory nature; the second was the failure of any willingness to engage in indexing; the third was that there was no regionalization. Once again the bill dealt with the whole area of the prairies. It was universally attacked, and withdrawn, and in the replacement that has been brought forward at this time there is evidence showing that the government has learned some lessons.

The question of indexing, of course, has continued to be of embarrassment to the present government. Most of us in this House remember what has become enshrined in history as the Truro speech of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner). That minister, after admitting that his most recent attempts at developing an economic policy for the country have failed, has departed for another round of mysterious economic conferences which keep him outside this House. The Minister of Finance, when the concept of indexing was introduced by the leader of my party, attacked that concept all out as the worst possible thing which could happen. As we know, a little later he embraced it as his own. That has become, of course, a favourite practice of that whirling dervish, the Minister of Finance. I will not be surprised if, when the budget comes down at the end of this month, we find that prominent in its contents are policies which he attacked with such roundness and vigour in the election campaign of ten months ago.

As I say, indexing was the matter he opposed in the period of the first introduction of this bill. For that reason, among others, there was no inclusion of an indexing provision in the first version of the bill that we received. But now there has been a change and the bill before us involves an indexing of a sort, an indexing of some of the costs of production. Yet, as several of my colleagues have indicated and as some Canadian farmers know to their great concern, indexing is not to be applicable to all the costs of production which Canadian farmers will face. It is to be a partial indexing; but a partial indexing is better than none at all. There are still serious difficulties that we will want to examine more fully at the committee stage, and I am sure individual Canadian farmers will wish to ask questions about the bill if they are given the opportunity to attend public meetings of a standing committee which has a mandate to travel.

The second element of that first version that was objectionable was the compulsory element. Now it is not completely compulsory; it is only partly compulsory for a farmer to become involved in this stabilization program. The minister delights in calling this a voluntary program, but this, I suggest is a highly misleading description. For one thing you are, in effect, locked into this program. You can only opt out of it. There is no provision to opt in, only a provision to opt out. Unless you take the initiative, you are involved in this program. That is a peculiar feature among Canadian government programs.

Many programs are said to be voluntary and give the right to individuals who may be affected to decide on whether they want to be in the program. In this case the