

this bill. It is interesting to note at the same time that to a very large extent the same questions or problem areas were raised by the witnesses who appeared before the committee and presented briefs.

I would like to commend the hon. member for Wetaskiwin on the amendment before us. The amendment deals with our main concern. We are convinced that, without this amendment, advance payments under this legislation would not be available to a significant proportion of otherwise eligible producers—producers who are not served by a properly constituted producer organization.

We recognize that grain producers in central and eastern Canada and grain producers outside of the designated area of the Canadian Wheat Board have been seeking this kind of legislation for some time, and for very good reasons. We recognize as well that this government and this parliament have an obligation and a definite responsibility to provide such a program, particularly in view of the fact that a similar program has been in effect in western Canada for some time. In fact, the government has attempted to defend the provisions of Bill C-2 by drawing a comparison to the Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act introduced about 19 years ago by a Conservative government.

On the surface this might appear to be a logical and appropriate defense to use, but does the government suppose that the situation as it was 19 years ago, in an area fully represented and served by the Canadian Wheat Board, is comparable to the present situation in central and eastern Canada where loans will have to be made by a multitude of marketing boards, agencies, commissions and producer organizations?

For this reason alone, the conditions and circumstances of those producers within the Canadian Wheat Board area and of producers to be served by this bill, although similar, are certainly not identical. It must be evident now to the government that the bill as it stands cannot give equal access to all eligible producers because not all of them, by any means, can be represented for the purposes of this bill, by a properly constituted producer organization.

● (1710)

If, on the other hand, the amendment before us gains the support of hon. members opposite and becomes part of the bill, a major inequity would be removed, and the same service which is rendered to producers within the Canadian Wheat Board area by the Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act would henceforth be available to all other producers in Canada.

During the earlier debate on this bill my colleagues and I raised a number of questions, and in a prepared opening statement the minister tried desperately to dismiss these questions, devoting six of his ten page opening statement to an attempt to refute what we thought were constructive criticisms. It should be noted that those very same questions were raised by witnesses who appeared before the committee and, indeed, some of our doubts were shared by government members opposite. In particular I might mention the hon. member

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for Scarborough East (Mr. O'Connell) who, although he represents a strictly urban riding, must be complimented for his contribution to those committee hearings.

I sincerely hope that in the future the hon. member will maintain his interest in legislation directed primarily to rural communities and that he will attend the Standing Committee on Agriculture on a regular basis.

During the second reading debate I suggested that in view of the way this bill was drafted its title should more accurately read "advance payments with limitations on some farm stored crops". Since the first meeting of the standing committee I stressed that our major concern is the inability of some producers to take advantage of this bill because of the absence of an adequately constituted organization or merely because of an insufficient volume of crop in the producers' areas.

Since the introduction of this bill I have indicated my party's support for the intent and principle of this type of legislation and, indeed, our desire for its early passage. In fact this debate would not be taking place today had we not given encouragement and certain commitments to the government House leader.

In all fairness I want to indicate as well that many of the questions raised in the second reading debate have been answered by departmental officials, and I thank them for their input and for their clarifications. However, let me remind them that in future the simple addition of explanatory notes would save us much valuable time. This observation is not purely a personal one; it is shared generally. In fact my good friend from the county of Oxford, Mr. Charles Munroe, the current president of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, delivering his brief to the committee, noted the following:

The main questions that can be raised about the bill relate to uncertainties as to how the bill, if it becomes law in its present form, might or should be interpreted, and whether some further spelling out of the intent might not be included in the text of the bill itself.

Those words support my contention and underline the need and desirability of more explanatory notations.

We can see no major problem in most areas because of the existence of many marketing boards, agencies, commissions and producer organizations, but it is very possible to foresee that there will be producers in areas where properly constituted organizations do not exist for a variety of reasons. For this reason and for others—for example, an insufficient volume of product from a certain area or region—we can easily predict that a number of producers will not be eligible for advance payments under this legislation. This is what the amendment before us today is all about. This amendment, if accepted, would not destroy the thrust and intent of this bill. On the contrary, it would simply ensure that all producers could participate in this program. It would ensure that all producers are extended an equal opportunity of access to the legislation.

I submit that without this amendment this bill would create disparity between producers and would deny advance payments to a significant proportion of otherwise eligible producers.