Western Grain Stabilization Act

Mr. Gustafson: I believe the Liberal Party has been playing politics with this Bill and in fact playing politics with the money which belongs to the farmers. Had it not been for the strong representation of western Members who are farmers, who understand the program and what it has not done, this Bill would not be before the House. We had drafted an amendment to provide for an interim payment. We are grateful for the interim payment. However, we do not like the fact that the Government is playing politics with farmers' money.

As early as last summer, the Conservative Party called for an interim payment and for a western grain stabilization payment for farmers. We have been doing that for over a year. The record will show that on September 16, I called for it in this House. On October 5 the Hon. Member for Crowfoot (Mr. Malone) called for it in the House. Again on October 7 we called for the western grain stabilization payment. On October 25, 1983 we again called for it. On November 17 the Hon. Member for Bow River (Mr. Taylor), who knows farming well, called for it. Yet it was not forthcoming. On December 8 the Hon. Member for Portage-Marquette (Mr. Mayer), who is the agricultural representative for this Party, called for it. The Hon. Member for Kindersley-Lloydminster (Mr. McKnight) called for it on April 17. On April 18 again the Hon. Member for Portage-Marquette called for it. The Hon. Member for Red Deer (Mr. Towers) has called for it, the Hon. Member for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Clark) has called for it, the Hon. Member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Neil) has called for it, and the Hon. Member for Saskatoon West (Mr. Hnatyshyn) has called for it. The list goes on and on. The Conservative Party has been calling for it for over a year. But the Government has played politics with it.

I would like to read part of a news release which appeared in *The Assiniboia Times.* Last summer I said to the reporter: "Watch the Liberals; they will play politics with the farmers' money". He wrote an article on May 2, 1984. I did not request him to write it. It reads:

I can remember very clearly at about this time last year when Conservative M.P. for Assiniboia Len Gustafson told me there would be "a flood of money" from the stabilization fund just before the next federal election. At that time, his words sounded extremely partisan. Although I never dismissed his prediction as just more politicking for his constituents, I did, however, feel that the federal Liberals would be a little more inventive or subtle in how they gave the farmers back their own money before an election.

That is exactly what has happened. When the program was designed in 1976 to meet the cash flow problems that farmers were facing, it was not designed to be a program for political propaganda. It was not designed to be a program to put the farmers' money into an account that the Government could use for the benefit of its political expediency. It was meant to help meet the cash flow problems of farmers.

What was this program all about? In 1976 the Hon. Otto Lang introduced the program and said that it was to meet the cash flow problem of farmers. Let us look at the history of what has happened in the farming community and how western Canada has suffered neglect under this Government because of its failure to move. I have heard it said by senior Members who sit on this side that they did not believe the

program would work at the time it was introduced. The Right Hon. John Diefenbaker, who we remember so well for his contributions to Canada, said: "If there were two cow pies in the pasture, the Hon. Otto Lang would step in both of them". I would like to say that grain stabilization has been one of them. There is no question about it: the program has not worked and I will show you, Mr. Speaker, how it has not worked.

Farmers have paid into the program since 1979. Members on this side, many of whom are farmers and permit-holders, understand the program well. Farmers initially paid $500 per year. Then it was increased to $900 per year. Then it was increased to $1200 per year. But since 1979, there has not been a payment to farmers. If a farmer began paying into the program in 1979, by now he would have paid the maximum of $5,700 and he has not received any return. The accumulated interest on that $5,700 amounts to over $8,000 of the farmer's own money. Do not let any Member or Minister on the Government side stand in his place and tell the farmers how much money the Government is paying to them. The Government is not returning the money which belongs to the farmers. Again and again the Minister of Agriculture stands in his place and indicates how much money the Government is putting into the program.

Due to the time, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move that we extend the sitting through the lunch hour because of the serious nature of this debate. We have a good deal more to say with respect to the Bill. It is important that it be passed quickly so that farmers can get their money. Therefore I move:

That in accordance with Standing Order 8(4) (a) this House extend the sitting through the lunch hour for the purpose of considering second reading stage of Bill C-33.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Herbert): The Hon. Member for Assiniboia has moved the motion, seconded by the Hon. Member for Red Deer (Mr. Towers), that the sitting continue through the lunch hour for the purpose of considering second reading stage of Bill C-33. In accordance with the Standing Orders, it requires that 25 Members rise in their place to object to the motion. Are there any Members who object to the motion?

Some Hon. Members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Herbert): There are no Members rising; therefore, I deem the motion to be carried.

Mr. Ouellet: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Herbert): The Hon. Minister of Labour (Mr. Ouellet) on a point of order.

● (1300)

[Translation]

Mr. Ouellet: Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment, on this occasion, that the Government is most willing to co-operate. That is why no one on this side of the House rose to object.