

*Government Orders*

As I said before, I compliment the department on the over-all view that it accepted and took part in from the different sectors of the industry.

There is no question that something needs to be done. The agricultural industry is in dire straits mainly at the primary producer level. I have seen figures over the years that every dollar received at the farm gate by primary producers, before it is through the system in our society, is multiplied seven times. We must keep that in mind. That emphasizes a saying that many of us have said for many years: "As goes agriculture, so goes the strength of any economy".

I would like to read clause 4(2)(a) of the bill and then raise some concerns that I have.

Clause 4(2)(a) reads as follows:

The program should not unduly influence the decision of producers of agricultural products with respect to production or marketing, and should encourage adjustments with respect to production or marketing so as to improve the effectiveness of the responses of producers to market opportunities.

As well, the bill is to address production or market neutrality, equity, consistency within international obligations and encouragement of long-term environmental sustainability and responsibility.

I have some concerns there. I can tell this House that unfortunately—and I mean that sincerely—GRIP is being farmed by producers. I know there will be people who argue that that cannot happen, but unfortunately it is. If there is one thing we do not need in the agricultural industry, it is something to change the decisions that producers make and not pay as much attention to market indications, to market prices and to market returns as they should.

I recognize fully that it is extremely difficult and maybe impossible to put a program in place which does not have that use made of it. In talking to individuals from different parts of Canada in the last number of weeks, the decisions on what they plant this year in many cases are going to depend on what they see in the short run being returned to them from the GRIP payments.

One can say that should not happen and, if they are looking at the long-term good of agriculture, they should not be doing that. I agree. What has happened in the short term in agriculture, especially at the primary producer level in the last number of years, is that even though farmers know what is the long run proper thing

to do as far as environmental conservation and long run investments are concerned, for example, they unfortunately and realistically have to survive in the short term. They have to satisfy the needs of their banker for the next 12 months, as well as their personal needs, the needs of their family and their social needs in the next 12 months. They may very well be forced into looking at what is sustainable economically, and economically only, for them in the short term and therefore have to neglect what would be best not only for their own individual operation in business, but collectively for the over-all good of the farmers and producers in the long run in order to get through until next year. We will worry about next year when next year comes.

I have some grave concerns that in the short term these programs may and I know are influencing cropping practices for this year and the direction of the crops.

In the same light, it is definitely going to encourage thoughts and actions toward cropping practices that are not the best for agriculture and for the good of all of us as Canadians as far as environmental sustainability is concerned.

There is encouragement with this and I know there are some safeguards that are being put in place. I advise the minister and hope it will take it under advisement that safeguards must be watched with this to prohibit what will likely occur in many cases. That is what we refer to in the primary producer sector as planting fence row to fence row.

One of the problems we have in Canadian agriculture at the present time is that we are planting crops on marginal land. Because they do not yield and because of the many attempts to get a decent yield, input costs are high. The yields are just not available from that type of property or land resource, therefore when the yields are obtained they have a high cost of production.

As far as adding something constructive, I wish there were something we could do. I hope that we are looking at it. I know that many of us are looking at a certain type of program.

• (1020)

I think we should consider—and it will have a short-term cost but I think it will have a long-term benefit—taking some of the marginal land in this country, which programs like this encourage farming, out of production