

Western Grain Stabilization

and his staff will be exercised in such a way that all who are to receive aid will receive it equally. I hope their markets will not be categorized. Rather, I hope that their needs will be measured by the yardstick of lack of income alone.

I bemoan the fact that when the potato program was implemented in the Atlantic area, it was implemented in one fashion for those who shipped to the fresh market and in another fashion for those who sold to the processing market. It left those selling to the processing market in a position of disadvantage. If the discretionary powers in the bill allow the minister to be unkind to some and kind to others, they should forthwith be struck from the legislation.

This bill, Madam Speaker, is in support of a principle to which I subscribe wholeheartedly. However, it seeks to provide income maintenance for a sector of agriculture. I submit that the principle of sector by sector help is unacceptable, although the concept of income maintenance for agriculture as a whole has been accepted and always supported by the members on my side of the House. I appeal to the government to look on the industry of agriculture through a farmer's eyes and not through an urban dweller's eyes, and to quit frigging around with a policy of aiding the industry on a piece by piece, ad hoc basis. The time has long since passed when western members can stand in this House, grin and say, "We are being looked after, but the rest of agriculture in Canada is to be treated in a different light."

I have referred to the case of CEMA and of the potato industry. I beg this House to adopt a rational approach. Let there be more farmer input in the decision-making process. Let us use statistics of cost as our guide as to what is needed by a particular farmer in a particular region to maintain his income. Let us throw in the wastepaper basket, where they belong, all the complicated formulas in this bill which must have emanated from one of the best mathematical minds in Canada—a mind highly qualified in mathematics but without any knowledge of agriculture. Let us make the legislation program easy to understand in its aims and income maintenance program. Let us put it into simple language which a farmer can understand. Let us get rid of all the gibberish in the bill; it will do nothing but confuse and establish an additional bureaucracy in this country.

There are three arms of government which are capable of administering this bill as it is presently constituted. It could be done by the prices stabilization board, perhaps it could be done by the Wheat Board, or perhaps it could be administered by the marketing arm of the Department of Agriculture. According to the way I read the bill, the program is to be administered by a minister to be named, together with a new bureaucracy which is to stand at his elbow and help him. Considering all the data which will need to be accumulated, the program should be in the hands of the Minister of Agriculture, otherwise that minister will not be doing his job: that is all we can assume.

The principle of the maintenance of farm income is good, Madam Speaker, but the fragmentation of the industry under different administrative bodies and interdepartmental committees is abhorrent to us.

[Mr. McCain.]

Mr. J. H. Horner (Crowfoot): Madam Speaker, this is the most complicated piece of legislation I have seen in my 17 years as a member of this House. Anyone who can understand this bill can understand how the CPR arrives at its freight rate formula, which is certainly complicated. I will not deal with the complexities of the bill; I want to deal more with the principle underlying it. It has been suggested that this bill is much improved compared with the previous bill on this subject, submitted in 1971. I am not sure this bill is an improvement. Certainly, it is far more complicated. Some of the obvious loopholes of the 1971 bill are to be plugged by this bill. Yet when you try to plug loopholes in poorly drafted legislation, you are bound to establish more and more regulations and qualifications. Certainly, this bill does that.

Some call the bill calamity insurance, but I say it is calamity insurance for the government. It is not calamity insurance for the farmer; it is calamity insurance for the government. Any government of any province or of any country will from time to time be confronted with emergencies. When a national emergency is declared, whether it be a hurricane in Texas, a flood in the Ottawa Valley, or a drought in the prairies, the government in charge must concern itself with the problem and try to bring about just treatment for the people affected. There must be just treatment for these people because of the emergency situation they have suffered through no fault of their own. This is often referred to as an act of God: it is out of the hands of both the individuals and the government.

● (1420)

This bill sets up a fund for the government, to be used in the event of a national emergency. The fund is contributed to at the rate of 2 per cent of gross sales by the producers, and 4 per cent of gross sales by the government. That concept is all right. Where, then, does it break down? There are many calamities that could occur in respect of which this fund could not be drawn upon. The government will be able to say to the people in those areas, "Sales have been good: this area does not qualify for assistance this year under this proposal and therefore we cannot make a payment." The government will have an excuse for not meeting the moral obligation it has when it takes office. I do not want to give this or any government any excuse for not assuming moral obligations they take on when they say they have the power, will and desire to govern.

The contributory fund is calamity insurance for the government; it is also insurance for the salesmen: however, it is not insurance for the producer. The producer may have a poor crop which may or may not be compensated for under this bill. He may have a good crop and it may or may not be affected by this bill. What will be affected by this bill is the situation when sales drop. When the Wheat Board or the agents of the Wheat Board fail drastically in selling six major grains, income will drop off and this bill will come into play. I want to make it abundantly clear that this is calamity insurance for the government and the salesmen. When the government takes office, it assumes the responsibility of looking after the citizens who elected it. From time to time those citizens are confronted with national emergencies which have been caused by acts of God. Grain producers are sometimes confronted with problems such as floods, hail,