

Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act

with the suggestions I am making now, these motions will be put and considered as now suggested.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): What about motions Nos. 8 and 9?

Mr. Speaker: It is brought to my attention that motions 8 and 9 should also be referred to at this time. The suggestion I should like to make to the House is that they be considered and disposed of separately.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, subject to any procedural discussion we might have on motion No. 7, the proposal you make regarding these amendments is satisfactory.

Mr. Speaker: We will now consider motion No. 1.

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Manpower and Immigration) moved:

That Bill C-239, An Act to amend the Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act, be amended by striking out lines 34 and 35 on page 2 and substituting the following:

"grain of any kind to the Board in a crop year under"

He said: Mr. Speaker, the main purpose of this amendment is to restore the cash advance legislation, as we will hope to see it after passing the current amendment, to the basic pattern which has existed since the inception of prairie grain advance payments some ten years ago; that is to say, when an advance has been taken upon grain, all grains upon which an advance can be taken, when it is delivered by a farmer, will be subject to deductions in respect of repayment. The bill, as it stands at the moment, after having been referred back from the committee would have the difficulty of seriously impeding or interfering with the security of the cash advance system by possibly limiting the recovery of money for advances to that portion of the grain upon which the advance itself was taken when that portion of the grain cannot, in the ordinary course, be identified. It would, therefore, have the effect of virtually destroying the cash advances system if the bill stood as it was reported back.

● (4:50 p.m.)

A question of principle is also involved, namely, whether when an advance is taken on wheat, the barley and oats grains delivered by the same producer should be taken into consideration with respect to deductions for the advance. It is the feeling of the Wheat Board that to do otherwise might interfere with the delivery of grain, and lead to some choices by farmers not to deliver certain grain at certain times. Accordingly, the amendment to restore the situation to the pattern that has existed since the law was first enacted is proposed.

Mr. J. H. Horner (Crowfoot): I find it strange that all of a sudden the minister should say this change must be made in the bill or the cash advances system will be ruined. Actually, Mr. Speaker, this clause was changed in the committee, and the ministers' amendment would merely restore it to its original wording. I think there is a very neat point here with regard to the worth of committee work.

[Mr. Speaker.]

The purpose of referring legislation to committees is to allow the committees to call knowledgeable witnesses to discuss the intent of the legislation, and whether or not the wording is sufficiently clear to carry out that intent. If this committee in its wisdom, following the advice of the experts, agreed that certain words should be deleted and others added to a particular clause of the bill, I would like to know how the minister, out of the blue, can come forward with the suggestion that the amended version of the bill is incorrect, and that the original wording should be restored.

The amendment proposes the restoration of the words "grain of any kind." The amendment moved in committee by the hon. member for Mackenzie (Mr. Korchinski) suggested that those words be struck out and that the words "grain to the Board on which an advance has been taken" be added. As recorded at page 41 of Committee Proceedings No. 53, the minister had this to say:

Frankly, I do not know that the words "of any kind" have any additional significance. I presume the draftsman introduced them to make absolutely clear that wheat, oats and barley were all involved in the repayment...

At the bottom of the same page, the minister is recorded as saying:

My opinion is that the removal of those words would not change in any way the legal effect of the clause.

At that time, the committee had the power to call the draftsman before it. It had the power to call witnesses from the Wheat Board. It had the power to inquire from them whether the change really meant anything. I repeat that the minister said:

My opinion is that the removal of those words would not change in any way the legal effect of the clause.

If the minister felt the way he does now, he should have requested representatives of the Canadian Wheat Board to appear before the Agriculture Committee. Mr. Speaker, I think it is shocking that the full contingent of members of the Canadian Wheat Board has not appeared before the Agriculture Committee, even though recently we have been dealing with three major pieces of farm legislation, all related to wheat and other grains. On one particularly short day of committee hearings one spokesman for the Canadian Wheat Board appeared. On three different occasions he replied that questions were not pertinent to the legislation and therefore he would not answer, or that he did not have the figures with him.

The amendment moved by the hon. member for Mackenzie was accepted by a vote of 13 to nine in the committee. It is a well known fact that the combined forces of the opposition muster only 13 votes in that committee, and that on that particular occasion a number of government supporters voted for the amendment.

Further, as recorded at page 41 of Committee Proceedings No. 53, the minister said:

With the words in I think the draftsman thought the clause was clearer than with the words out, but I believe that the same effect would hold true, because the words "of any kind"—

This is the important point I want to make. Just a few minutes ago the minister told us that without his amend-