

that the standing committee go across the country, particularly to the prairie regions, so that it will have the benefit of the advice of the people who will be directly affected by the bill.

It is curious that this bill is sponsored by the minister in charge of the Wheat Board when clearly it should have been introduced in this House by the Minister of Agriculture. Since the minister was elevated from the back benches to his present position he has presided over a diminishing department. On one side is Beryl Plumptre picking away at him, and on the other side is the minister responsible for everything under the sun, picking away too. My colleague points out that he is even having difficulties with the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Ouellet).

The Minister of Agriculture often tells us in this House that he is one of the most popular ministers in the government—in fact in any government known to man! It has to be admitted that he is popular with his colleagues because they all come to him to take away responsibilities that should properly be his. This bill, for instance, should have been brought forward by the Minister of Agriculture but instead came in under the sponsorship of the law professor from Saskatchewan.

A meeting of the Standing Committee on Agriculture was cancelled tonight in order to allow the minister to be here to get as close as he ever will to this grain stabilization bill. The standing committee was to have considered Bill C-50, the agricultural stabilization bill. That quite dramatically raises the question of why two bills dealing with agricultural stabilization should come before the House with different sponsors. Why should the agricultural stabilization bill be introduced by the Minister of Agriculture, and the grain stabilization bill which is before us now be introduced by the Minister of Justice?

I think it is important to underline that the matters for which the Minister of Justice is presumably responsible relate to the Wheat Board. The activities of the Wheat Board in relation to grains, however, are by legislation restricted to and concentrated upon marketing. The Wheat Board has nothing to do with the income of farmers or the stabilization of their income. That responsibility properly lies with the Minister of Agriculture.

It is very important to raise the question of the government's determination to strip the Minister of Agriculture of a responsibility which belonged in that portfolio when others held it. If there is any sense or reason to the direction of agricultural policy in Canada today, that responsibility should still belong to his portfolio.

Why does the Minister of Justice introduce legislation dealing with income stabilization in relation to grain? It is quite clear that for some of the grains included in the bill such as rye, flax, and rapeseed, the Wheat Board has only a limited responsibility related to quotas. The sponsorship of this bill by the Minister of Justice responsible for the Wheat Board will only lead to an expansion of the interest of the Wheat Board instead of curtailing its activity.

There is a parliamentary reason for worrying about this sponsorship. The relationship of this bill to the Canadian Wheat Board may make it more difficult for parliament to keep tabs on what is going on. We are all acquainted with

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the frequent practice of the Minister of Justice in charge of the Wheat Board of ducking criticism of that body by saying, "That is a Wheat Board responsibility," and accepting responsibility only when things turn out well. Everyone who has attempted to read the bill agrees that it is a highly complicated piece of legislation, so it may turn out to be difficult for parliament to get answers.

The simple answer to the question of why the Minister of Agriculture has been stripped of a responsibility which should properly be his may be that the Minister of Justice is more influential in the cabinet, and that this bill is another piece of the personal political empire that he is attempting to accumulate.

I suppose it could be said that the Minister of Justice does not have much to do. His activities seem to be limited to denying inquiries into activities which clearly demand them, and to offering unsolicited legal advice to the Secretary of State (Mr. Faulkner) when that minister wants to extend assistance to organizations in the constituency of the Minister of Justice. He does not have much to do in his own portfolio and, being an ambitious man, reaches for responsibilities which properly belong to the Minister of Agriculture.

We have a certain sympathy for the dilemma of the Minister of Justice because he cannot decide which other portfolio he wants to have—is it Minister of Justice responsible for agriculture, or Minister of Justice responsible for transport? He has just returned from a whistle stop pogo stick jump of the prairies, grabbing at the jurisdiction of the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand). The Minister of Transport was so alarmed that he took the unprecedented step of going out west himself to see what the Minister of Justice was up to, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Justice is entitled to his ambition, of course, but we must seriously examine his attempts to take over the functions of the Department of Transport and whole programs of the Department of Agriculture. These ambitions portend confusion and a lack of co-ordination of agricultural policies.

An hon. Member: I hear he wants to take over CEMA.

Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain): That is one that he has been content to leave to the Minister of Agriculture—if he has it and not Beryl Plumptre.

The serious problems are the capacity of the Government of Canada effectively to co-ordinate agricultural policy, and the right of Canadian farmers to know that the programs being devised and the structures being established are in their interests, and not designed to further the ambition of a particular minister, such as the Minister of Justice. There are very real concerns. The bill before us deals with the incomes and security of countless numbers of Canadians who make their living in one of the most unpredictable professions, agriculture. The confusion about who is responsible for the co-ordination of agricultural policy makes things even more difficult for them.

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There is another aspect to this which concerns many members of this House, and it is that the duplication involving competition among ministers for jurisdiction over agriculture may substantially add to the costs of