

cent increase if it does go to 5 per cent, and that is a lot of money. I wonder if that is what the government is doing. Why did they not put the amount in? They did not say they were increasing it to 3 or 4 per cent. If it is about 3 per cent, I think that is justified; but if it gets up to around 5 per cent, then it is probably more than is justified.

● (1610)

Last, I want to give credit to the review board, or maybe even the Minister of Agriculture. Someone has listened carefully to the representations that we made last year, where there were some unfair provisions in the formula for paying. One was that they excluded a crop like mustard—I see that this year it is included—because the basis for making the payment is the seeded acreage. In western Canada they have added one-third of the summer fallow, but they left out a lot of crops, including mustard, which troubled me some, because a lot of producers in southern Alberta produce mustard.

If there was a little more time, or if I were to take a little more time, honourable senators, I would ask a few more questions, but these are the things that I need to know now, if I can, because during the next four or five weeks I intend to do what a good senator does—that is, that he goes about the parts of the country that he represents here and explains government programs to people. In this case I believe that the government has come forward with a program that will be helpful. It is welcome, and will certainly relieve a good deal of anxiety for some people who are apprehensive about their wellbeing after the government announced a significant decline in the initial price of grains back in April.

So while it is several months late, it is still welcome. I hope that we can have much further detail so that we can answer these questions during the recess.

Hon. Efstathios William Barootes: Honourable senators, I am pleased to try to answer those questions which Senator Olson has, but first let me take this opportunity to extend my good wishes and congratulations to him on the commendable way in which he has presented his points of view. We particularly appreciate this from Senator Olson, because we have learned to have respect for his judgment, respect for him because of the breadth of experience—

Senator Frith: Put your hockey helmet on and put your shoulder pads on!

Senator Barootes:—and knowledge that he has in the field of which he speaks. I thank him very much.

Insofar as the views that he has expressed commending the government's programs extend to the rest of his confrères on his side of the chamber, I wish to thank him doubly, and wish them all a happy holiday.

With respect to the questions, if I am remiss in not getting all the answers that he wants exactly as he wants them, please forgive me, because my information has just been arriving today as well, although I was able to obtain some of it last night. In respect to the extension of these things, let me quote some of the things that have been said by our Prime Minister and repeated since then by our Minister of Agriculture.

[Senator Olson.]

Regarding the commitment of the government to future extension, he has said:

This government believes that agriculture is a cornerstone of our economy and the lifeblood of many rural communities.

That is why we are committed to building a strong and stable future for Canadian agriculture.

This government will stand by farmers and their families when they are hurting.

When farmers are hurting, this nation is hurting.

I will give Senator Olson one or two other statements which may alleviate his anxiety about future extension of programs. This comment was made by the Prime Minister in respect to the international crisis that has occurred in prices, trading and marketing on December 15, 1987. He said:

I can assure you that Canada will continue to play a lead role until international reform is achieved. In the meantime, farmers can have confidence in our priority commitments to building a stronger, more competitive agriculture industry in this country. The path on this is clear—

Pending international solution, we must continue to cushion farmers from the hurt caused by international subsidy practices; continue to maintain our agricultural markets, and aggressively pursue new ones.

In this respect let me say that in the last two years our percentage of the export market, as pursued by the Canadian Wheat Board—that fine and diligent organization—has gone from 17 per cent of the world export market to 24 per cent. I doubt if it will hold there, but also in the matter of volumes traded we have reached a new high of 31 million tonnes of export this year. So we are not losing markets, but the price is killing us, as Senator Olson pointed out.

He also asked some questions in respect of mustard. May I ask if mustard and mustard seed are the same thing?

Senator Olson: Yes.

Senator Barootes: I can alleviate your anxiety, concern and crocodile tears for the mustard growers in your area.

Senator Olson: My prayers have been answered!

Senator Barootes: They are included in the new expanded 12 commodities which will go under the Western Grains Stabilization Plan.

Senator Olson: I thank you for that.

Senator Barootes: I wish to hear your applause for that, sir.

Senator Olson: Hear, hear!

Senator Barootes: Next, I will speak about the levy. I think I have something on the levy that might be of some help to you.

If the levy is presently 1 per cent of the revenue of a farmer delivering grains which are covered under the stabilization plan—

Senator Olson: A little more than that.