

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, March 8, 1991

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

FARM INCOME PROTECTION ACT

MEASURE TO ENACT

The House resumed from Thursday, March 7, consideration of the motion of Mr. Mazankowski that Bill C-98, an act authorizing agreements between the Government of Canada and the provinces to provide for protection for the income of producers of agricultural products and to enable the Government of Canada to take additional measures for that purpose, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Agriculture.

Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Prince Edward—Hastings): Madam Speaker, it is certainly a pleasure to rise in the House this morning to speak on Bill C-98, the Farm Income Protection Act.

At the outset I want to point out to the House and to make very clear and understandable to Canadians, to those who will be reading the proceedings and to those who are watching this morning, that even though there has been a lot of talk about a farm safety net program being implemented in Canada basically for the immediate use of the primary producers, and therefore hopefully of some benefit to the whole agrifood industry, this bill is only an enabling piece of legislation. I know that is the case with many bills that we pass in the House of Commons or that are brought forth.

• (1010)

When we read through this bill, we have to understand that it really does not say very much in terms of

answering the questions of the agricultural industry. This bill is going to allow the government and the minister to go province to province throughout this country and make the deal that is most suitable, hopefully, to the individual province. There are pluses and minuses to that. There is the plus that it can recognize regional diversity and regional differences, but there is the minus that it allows the deals to be made. That part of it tends to make some of us nervous.

I have other concerns that I would like to raise this morning, but first of all I would like to compliment the department on the manner in which it went through the process of getting this piece of legislation in place. I also want to remind the government not to get too excited about that, because in recent days I have talked to some people who were involved in that process, in what was referred to as the implementation committee which started to meet last fall, a cross-section of the industry, including many farmers. It is interesting that the members of the implementation committee did not get a copy of this legislation until about 48 hours ago. In speaking to some of them, they were absolutely appalled that much of what is in this piece of legislation was not discussed by the implementation committee, was not debated with them and, contrary to the comments of the minister in the House yesterday, they will not and cannot take ownership.

I noted with interest yesterday that the minister said that he takes no ownership. I believe his comments were: "We claim no ownership of this particular policy." That is a beautiful way of putting it. He went on further to comment yesterday that he hopes it works. Politicians being what they sometimes are accused of, if it works I am sure the minister naturally will take claim.

I am concerned with the fact that there are clauses in that bill which the implementation committee was not expecting to see, does not understand why they are there and, rightfully I think, needs an explanation of what is there. I am sure that those points, when the bill goes to committee, will be raised by all parties and hopefully can be cleared up at that time.