

Hopefully, it is the prospect of selling more of them at a better price, and thus look after the farmer's interests in a better fashion. I have been trying to make an honest assessment of the matter, and am still wondering at the minister's reasoning.

I suggest to the minister that there has been some hanky-panky in connection with the prices that producers have been receiving for rapeseed. I can give one instance of a difference of 15 cents a bushel for rapeseed between Lloydminster and Maidstone. Sometimes the difference is only 10 cents per bushel, but that means a lot of money to an individual who has grown several thousand bushels. Producers wonder why there cannot be some other method of handling these grains. Occasionally a farmer gets burned if he sells his rye or flax at a low price on the open market. As a result, he thinks the Wheat Board type of selling is not a bad thing. I can recall when we had the option of selling on the open market or selling to the Wheat Board. When prices were good people sold on the open market, but when there was a surplus of grain and prices were down, people sold to the Wheat Board. The only time they used the Wheat Board was when there was trouble. I hope the minister replies to this point. I think it is a good move, assuming the Wheat Board uses the power given it wisely and well.

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I wish to say just a few words. I believe the bill will get second reading and go to committee later this afternoon. I just want to say that, in my humble opinion, the over-all package of federal government agricultural legislation, of which this bill is part, contains a collusive conspiracy between the government and government officials to denude the rural areas of western Canada of farmers, particularly those on small, family farms. I do not think there is any question about that. I asked the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) a question during the question period today. He really did not answer me factually, and the very indignant nature of his response indicated that there was no question about the purpose of the government's agricultural legislation.

Some figures will indicate the truth of this assertion. According to the DBS, total grain cash receipts in 1967 in Saskatchewan were \$737 million; in 1968, they were down to \$665 million; in 1969, down to \$495 million, and in 1970 down to \$449 million. There are similar figures showing over-all cash receipts received by the agricultural industry throughout the three Prairie provinces. In Alberta, these receipts fell from \$794 million to \$729 million. In Manitoba, the figure also is down.

The bill which we are discussing contains two elements which have been debated by my colleagues and other members of the opposition parties. But surprisingly enough very few, if any, government supporters took part in the debate to support the bill. That part of the bill dealing with the \$100 million might well have been the subject of a very simple arrangement. Nobody in this House has indicated any objection to these subsidies being given to the farmers who desperately need the money. This payment could have been made in the way it was during the administration of the right hon.

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member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) when a simple item in the estimates was brought forward, debated and passed. This could have been done some considerable time ago.

• (3:50 p.m.)

The minister has indicated that, in his view, there is no intention to utilize the other part of the legislative program which permits the government to put into effect provisions which would bring rapeseed and the other grains mentioned under the control of the Canadian Wheat Board. He simply wants to have that power in case it may be needed. I disagree with that form of legislation. When the government needs power it should come forward and ask for it. There is no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that this bill is related to the provincial election in Saskatchewan. I do not want to get involved in discussing that as we have other problems, but I think it is disgraceful when a legislative program is related to a provincial election.

I should like to reinforce the point I made regarding the serious and deteriorating situation of agriculture in western Canada. I farmed there myself for a number of years and when I first went out to practise my profession I had the opportunity to meet and become associated with thousands of people in Alberta. I know that they are being driven constantly and continuously from the land into urban centres thereby causing problems for the areas they leave as well as those areas into which they are forced.

As the sprawling metropolitan areas of the east and west struggle with the miseries of overcrowding, weary farmers, ranchers, village dwellers and their educated young flee the Prairies by the thousands. Figures published by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics indicate this. The drain on the countryside has caused an almost desperate situation in many rural areas, and especially on the plains of the heartland, as people leave. Economic survival becomes more difficult and dozens of towns are dying, some are already dead. The Prairies are part of this problem and so are the urban areas. As a result of this exodus, fairly well educated and motivated people settle in urban areas and there is no question that they tend to displace people already there who need jobs.

The problems of pollution, overcrowding and the concomitant difficulties which are being posed are part of the total economic picture. In spite of the answer of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) to my question this afternoon, there is no doubt that the actions of the government and their advisers are such that we can only assume they are gripped by this stupid, wrong and false determination to strip the rural areas of all population except those people who, in the view of the economic advisers of the government, are competent to handle the problems of the agricultural industry. The rules and conditions which are being laid down contain all the economic factors which usually prevail under a government bureaucracy. I resent that and I think most people in western Canada resent it.