

Prairie Grain Stabilization Act

On the other side of the question, the minister responsible for the Wheat Board stated that the provisions of clause 32—that is what he called the transitional feature—are tied into and are part of the bill because they are based upon the stabilization provisions contained in the body of the bill as well as the repeal of the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act which, he noted, was likewise provided for in the bill.

● (9:50 p.m.)

Hon. members will recall that a ruling was made on a similar point of order in respect of Bill C-207, an act respecting the organization of the government of Canada. Mr. Speaker's ruling on that occasion is to be found at page 283 of *Votes and Proceedings* for January 26, 1971. This ruling reviewed the precedents and indicated that in all the circumstances Mr. Speaker felt that he should not take the "drastic and extreme" position of saying that the bill could not be accepted. His Honour then stated, however, as pointed out by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre during the discussion on the point of order, that there must be a point where an omnibus bill becomes more than an omnibus bill and is unacceptable from a procedural viewpoint.

I would like to thank all hon. members who assisted the Chair on the point of order now before it for determination. It seems to the Chair that while the matter is not free from doubt, there is a relationship between clause 32, between clauses 33 and 34 referred to by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and the remainder of the bill.

The Chair suggests that there is no specific set of rules or guidelines governing the content of a bill. It follows, of course, that there should be a theme of relevancy among the contents of a bill and they must be relevant and subject to the umbrella which is raised by the terminology of the long title of the bill.

It is, of course, a matter of judgment in each case as to when a bill offends to the point that it should be ruled as unacceptable because it contains disparate matters. In my opinion this bill cannot be said to go that far. Therefore, I cannot agree that Bill C-244 should be divided by the Chair and I think that the motion for second reading should be put to the House.

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Manpower and Immigration) moved that Bill C-244, respecting the stabilization of prairie grain sale proceeds and to repeal or amend certain related statutes, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Agriculture.

He said: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-244 now before the House is a further portion of the total approach which this government is taking to the problems facing the grain industry. I would like to review for hon. members the way in which these problems have existed for many years without any totally effective action in relation to them, and to put the point to hon. members that in this group of bills, as with our total program for the grain farmer, we are attempting in rather short order to tackle many problems which have lain dormant for a long time.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker.]

I could mention the fact that the quota system which was brought into being a long time ago was very severely criticized as long ago as 1958 by a commissioner appointed by the then Conservative government to study the question. The Bracken commission described the quota system as something which, if it was in effect for a long time, would create inequities which would prove to be intolerable. Of course, nothing was done about that quota system. The same quota system stayed in effect throughout the time of that and successive governments.

During this period of time we have been examining all the problems facing the grain industry, trying to put the situation right. The quota system had been defective because it favoured one grain over the others. It had been defective by encouraging farmers to produce one particular grain, wheat, even if they lived and farmed in areas where other grains were better from an agricultural point of view. The quota system of their delivery privilege in terms of the money they could get from this grain simply dictated that they do this notwithstanding the agricultural conditions which they faced.

For many years farmers had been growing grains on the basis of far too limited information. When deciding what to plant, a farmer faces a real challenge. He always will, because he has to look at all the circumstances of the market and at his own ability and his farm before deciding what he should do. It seemed to us that he at least deserved as much information as was available and that he should receive it prior to seeding time.

This is what led us this year, for the first time, to indicate to farmers what their initial prices would be on March 1, so that they would have a final opportunity to look at those prices in determining their seeding intentions. This led us to introduce the cash advances legislation which provided greater equity as between grains and reflected to the farmer what his income would be on a particular grain so that he could determine what he should grow.

It is, of course, axiomatic that we have been concerned with the most important issue facing farmers, that of marketing. It was vital that we improve in every way possible the facilities available to the Canadian Wheat Board to market grain in the world. This led us to introduce credit programs which have brought us into markets to which we either did not have access for many years or we had not entered before. We got into these markets in a very big and important way.

Mr. Horner: Will the minister permit a question before ten o'clock? Will he clear up the doubts in the minds of hon. members and all Canadians in connection with his position in this regard? I understand that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) is seeking an appointment to the Senate. Is this minister also seeking an appointment to the Senate?

Mr. Lang: We have heard a good deal from the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) during the past couple of days. I must say that that remark is as relevant and as accurate as anything else he has said.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!