

Western Grain Stabilization

in one year and out the next seems to me to be something that we would want to question very seriously before adopting.

As I say in respect of the voluntary aspect, I am rather sympathetic toward the suggestion about the new producer, but in respect of the proposition that people should be able to fly back and forth at will, if you like, without any regard to the continuity of the plan, I am not persuaded that that would be a particularly good idea.

● (2120)

The second aspect, which I said is more substantial than the rather weak criticism that this bill is complicated, seems to have more merit. That is the question of regionalization. It is important to make this plan the best we can put together. It is important to make it sensitive, if we can, to provincial, or perhaps even smaller regional variations. It is important to recognize the very practical differences between one region on the prairies and another and between one part of a province and another.

Earlier this evening I saw the hon. member for Meadow Lake (Mr. Cadieu) in the House. His part of Saskatchewan varies rather drastically from mine. There are real substantial and practical differences. As far as statistical-ly possible, it would be useful to move toward a greater regionalization in the concept of the stabilization program.

I am happy that in his remarks back in December when he introduced the bill for first reading, and in his comments earlier this week, the minister clearly indicated that, if at all possible, work would be proceeding toward this worthwhile end, and hopefully in the future we will see that, based upon greater sensitivity to regional differences.

There is an important question we should be asking, and that deals with how far we should go with this concept. I want to be very careful before recommending a reduction of a grain stabilization plan to the absolute individual non-averaged basis. It seems to me that there is a danger there, and that we should be careful before we proceed to it. The danger is simply that a plan of that nature would serve to reduce the incentive for good farming practices and dampen a producer's personal initiative.

I do not believe farmers generally would want to see a program which would render it rather irrelevant as to whether they followed good production practices and properly exercised their personal judgments regarding how their own farming operations should be run. That is a problem, if we are talking about what really amounts to an individual kind of calculation. This is a consideration which I think we should bear in mind when we consider the general question of making the plan more sensitive to regions, or perhaps going beyond that.

Over the last four months or so since the grain stabilization plan was introduced in this House last December, I have been spending a good deal of time around my part of Saskatchewan talking to farmers at dozens of meetings, public and private, and invariably the question of the stabilization plan for grain came up. I have found, in my discussions with producers, a great deal of curiosity about the plan, and an anticipation to hear what the full scope is and to hear the full detail. They have many questions, but above all in my discussions I found a very broad and

[Mr. Goodale.]

general measure of support for the stabilization plan introduced by the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board.

We all have to be involved in the informational process, because before producers, either in a political sense or in the economic sense, can make a judgment about this bill, they will want to understand clearly and fully the total implications. There is a responsibility on every one of us in this House to engage in that information process, and to assist farmers in western Canada to understand what the stabilization bill stands for, what it will attempt to do, and how it will effect individual producers.

I am looking forward to serious consideration for this bill and parliamentary approval at a very early date, at least in time for application of the stabilization plan to the 1975 year. I think western farmers are looking forward to the same thing.

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Madam Speaker, I have been interested in listening to this debate, but I have not enjoyed any speech more than the one just made by the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Goodale). When the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) does not look back, he is not really sure whether the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lang) is making the speech or whether he made it the other day. I noticed he was interested in both speeches and in their similarity.

The hon. member for Assiniboia made a statement, which I thought was very amusing, about how wonderful the stabilization plan was when it was first introduced in 1970, and about how much farmers would have benefited from it. He is repeating an argument the Minister of Justice made the other night by saying that if the plan had been in effect back in the late 1960's, farmers would have benefited much from it. It is probably safe to say that by killing the stabilization bill as it was proposed in 1970-71, we probably saved western Canadian farmers something in excess of \$500 million.

The government was in a position to do a number of things which were involved in the original stabilization plan, which it did. It dropped the storage grain reserves act after it retained very little storage for a two year period. That provided western farmers with the ability to store grain without having to pay exorbitant costs for a long period of time. I think it would run into hundreds of millions of dollars over a period of time. Of course that is no longer available to western Canadian farmers.

In another piece of legislation now before parliament we are again dropping the prairie farm assistance bill, which has within it \$7 million or \$8 million. If we had dropped that in the 1970-71 year, I presume the farmer would have benefited from that fund in those intervening four years at least \$10 million a year and probably more, which means another \$40 million or \$50 million.

That indicates to me one of the weaknesses of this stabilization program because that assistance which was provided to western Canada for many years, and which was used by farmers, is no longer available to them. Substituted for that is a new proposition which will stabilize the shortfall in income, if that shortfall takes place, over the whole area. This is being done in a very complicated way, despite the remarks of the hon. member for