

Government Orders

groups are going to be heard. After second reading, it will go to committee, despite what the government proposes, despite the government's intention on ramming this bill through this House. It will go to committee.

The reason that farmers are not receiving advance payments now is not because of the members on this side of the House, it is because of the members on the government side of the House. If the members on the government side of the House had the interests of farmers at heart, had the interests of producers at heart, they would allow advance payments to go through this year, as they have gone through for the last number of years, in fact past decades.

An. Hon. Member: Since 1957.

Mr. Laporte: It would allow this bill to be debated properly, would allow for groups to speak to the committee, to speak to this government and put their positions forward. But the government does not want to hear any opposition to its proposals. That is why it is attempting to ram this bill through. It is the government's fault, it is not the members on this side of the House who are at fault. It is the government's fault for denying farmers throughout this country the interest free loans, the advance payments that they so rightly deserve and that they and all of rural Canada need.

In conclusion, I would just like to point out that we in the New Democratic Party are committed to a viable rural community, a community that has the compassion to maintain seniors in their homes, in communities where they grew up and lived, and in communities that they love and where they want to stay.

We are committed to developing policies that are going to allow young families to locate in rural communities if they want to locate there. We are committed to developing policies that are going to allow small businesses to be viable. Let us not forget that small business in this country creates more jobs than any other sector in this nation. This government is ignoring small business.

We are committed to the development of those programs and we are committed to providing services to those communities so that they can be viable and vital throughout this nation.

Mr. Ferguson: Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the member for his observations on this bill and the impact it

will have on the farm sector in Canada. Will he comment on the level of producer support for this bill across western Canada and state whether that support and resolve on behalf of the producers and their organizations is even building in favour of the amendment that is before this House at this time.

• (1520)

Mr. Laporte: There is a lot of concern throughout western Canada about this bill. Certainly I have spoken to some groups who wish to be heard and have their positions put forth. The prairie pools wish to have their message heard. Certainly the National Farmers' Union which represents many farmers throughout not only western Canada but all of Canada wish to be heard on this matter.

Other groups such as the Manitoba Corn Growers Association and the honey producers from Manitoba and Alberta wish to have their positions put forward.

There are groups from various commodities, various aspects of agriculture who desire to be heard. They have a lot of concern that this bill is one more nail in the coffin of rural Canada. In these advance payments. The imposition of an interest rate on these advance payments simply is not beneficial to rural Canada.

Further, the government is increasing the amount of the limit to \$250,000, of which it is guaranteeing 90 per cent. It knows full well that most small producers will not come anywhere near \$250,000. To even bring that amount up indicates the government's attitude toward agriculture. The government always claims that it is helping agriculture. Well, if you are a large producer, if you are on an industrial farm, that might be true. It sure is not true if you happen to be a small producer, a family farm, whether it is in Saskatchewan, or Alberta, or Ontario, or Quebec, or in the Maritimes.

This is a government that cares not or thinks not of this type of producer. Yes, there are many groups in western Canada and throughout all of Canada who are very concerned about this bill, who would like to see the government simply put this matter on hold, to allow for advance payments to go through interest free and allow for a proper and thorough debate of this bill so that Parliament can do its real duty, that is represent the people of all of Canada.