

development of agriculture in the north, at least not in the northwest part of Canada that I know.

I am also pleased to speak on this bill because it includes a couple of basic principles. These principles are partially established in it. First, what is fair for a large group of people somewhere in Canada is also fair for a small group of people living in quite different conditions. By extending this assistance to the Yukon and the Northwest Territories, we are recognizing the right of those areas to be treated as if they were just as important as the rest of Canada, which they are. This is an important principle, be it articulated in an assistance bill, such as this, or in any other piece of legislation which gives equal opportunity to all the regions of the country.

There is also a broader principle brought forward in this bill which I hope this House will consider every time it approaches any legislation which deals with transportation. Much of western Canada's alienation has to do with being put upon by Canada's transportation policies. For example, the western farmer feels very uneasy about the fact that he pays the freight to ship his grain to the east and then pays the freight on the machinery that he buys that comes from the east. This can be machinery, a TV set, or anything else that he purchases that was made in the east. Westerners have become used to paying the transportation or the freight both ways, but they are not happy about it. It is one of the basic complaints and reasons for alienation in the west. Let us not allow this kind of alienation to establish itself in the north. Let us start dealing with it as soon as possible. Let us not allow it to become a factor in the development of the north.

I sometimes dream of a transportation policy based on service rather than on profit which would not penalize anyone because of where that person lives. Maybe the time will come when the northerners will not pay any more to live there than we have to pay to live here in Ottawa.

● (2100)

There are a few other things about this bill I should like to mention. First, if it turns out that the bill was intended to assist in the development of the cattle industry, the poultry industry and other farm operations of that kind for which grain is needed, well and good, but if it turns out that the greatest benefit of this bill will accrue to outfitters who have very little stake in the development of the life of the territories, we should be cautious about the support we give it. Second, there is a danger of it being detrimental to agriculture because the bill subsidizes the movement of grain into the territories and there is an outside chance that it might cut into the profits of those growing grain locally. Again, we should be cautious about that.

There is another area in which caution is required. Should agriculture be developed extensively until the land claims in the Yukon and the territories have been solved to the satisfaction of the native people in those regions? There are certain aspects of the basic legislation which we are amending by this bill which trouble me somewhat, but they are not dealt with in the measure before us. What we are considering now is

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extending to the Northwest Territories and the Yukon assistance which is given to other parts of Canada, and we support the bill because it bears out a principle we support.

We must be fair to all regions and attempt to treat them in somewhat the same manner. This kind of recognition will be good for the unity of all parts of the nation. The time may come when we shall need to pay far more attention to the agricultural potential and production capacity of the north, and it makes sense to begin recognizing this now. We shall therefore support Bill C-15.

Mr. Charles Mayer (Portage-Marquette): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to say a few words on Bill C-15. It is an important bill to the areas to which it will extend freight feed assistance, namely, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon.

It is important we should look at the principle of the bill which is to make it easier to produce livestock in the territories and the Yukon. I should like to underline what the hon. member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Neil) said with regard to realizing the potential for production in this area as part of an over-all assistance package rather than simply doing things on a piecemeal basis, for example, assisting the transportation of feed into the region. The potential of the region to be self-sufficient in terms of what it is capable of producing should also be part of any over-all program.

I had the opportunity to travel into the territories, not very far, but certainly up the Peace River Valley and for a few miles into the Northwest Territories, and it struck me as an area with rich potential for feed grain production. It appears to me that if we were to contemplate making the area self-sufficient in feed grain as part of an over-all policy, it would be a good thing. First, we might try to encourage the production of livestock in that area through feed grain assistance and then, as part of that policy, we might encourage the production of feed grains in the area itself. Such a program would make much more sense to me than simply extending feed freight assistance to the area, probably encouraging farmers there to rely on production of feed grains grown outside their own area, which would be to their own detriment if, in fact, they could, if encouraged, become self-sufficient in feed grain.

The second point I have to make is this: if there is to be any stability in agriculture it is through diversity so that producers are not entirely dependent upon the market for one crop for their livelihood and to meet the expenses of their operation. If there were a feed grain production industry in the Northwest Territories, as I believe is possible, it would be capable of supporting a livestock industry. So, if markets or production turned out to be bad in any one year, producers would have a second source of income. On the prairies, for instance, if there is excess production of feed grains there is an alternative to exporting feed grains to a poor market or a glutted market. A healthy livestock industry means there is a method of marketing feed grains through livestock. This makes sense to me in terms of an over-all plan of encouraging over-all production in the Northwest Territories. If we could do it on more than one