

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): It being one o'clock, I do now leave the chair until two o'clock this afternoon.

At one o'clock the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 2 p. m.

Mr. McCain: Madam Speaker, though the formula is somewhat confusing to a layman in the English language, as I am, one of the factors which is not given much consideration in the determination of what shall be part of a stabilization program seems to be capital cost. Capital cost is a very significant part of a business operation in any democratic country, yet in the formula described under this legislation I fail to see where there is any allowance for such cost.

I mentioned earlier that there was no allowance for interest charges. This is another factor which is apparently omitted but which must be taken into consideration if one is to arrive at a proper figure of cost for any agricultural product. It may vary from region to region of Canada, as the same product is produced in different areas and may not always have the same bearing upon the unit cost of the crop, but it is there as part of that cost and, as in every other business, it is a fundamental part of a sound operation and should be considered.

In principle, as I said earlier, virtually every individual concerned about agriculture would be prepared to support this bill, but it is legislation which by its very nature in meeting a specific purpose is extremely discriminatory. It may be said that this is an unkind statement from a politician on the left of Mr. Speaker, but let me cite, for instance, the treatment CEMA has received from the Government of Canada. Farmers under CEMA have been asked—as farmers under this legislation will be asked—to contribute to their own support. CEMA collects, through its producers, large amounts of money for support. So it will be with grain producers of western Canada, but they will have more than a matching contribution from the federal government which is intended to assist them in times of economic trouble.

Everyone knows the woeful position in which egg producers of Canada, under CEMA, found themselves; yet there has not been a suggestion by the government that it is prepared to match in any way the contributions which egg producers may have made for their own support. I submit that this is gross discrimination against the egg producers of Canada organized under CEMA, and they should certainly be parked at the minister's door—who knows which minister; he is yet to be appointed—asking for comparable treatment. I say it is discrimination and that this principle should apply to other agricultural items wherever they may be produced in Canada.

Another thing which is left completely uncertain in this legislation is this: there is no apparent room for provincial participation. At least, there is no mention of it. It does not, of course, preclude provincial participation. It is interesting to note that the Cattlemen's Association, in presenting their brief to the agricultural committee, made it a

Western Grain Stabilization

specific point to ask that the provinces not participate in the relief of agricultural economic problems anywhere in Canada. It is certainly to be hoped that under this act the provinces will not only be asked not to provide relief, but will be encouraged to abandon responsibility for the support of this agricultural program. Let us hope that the same philosophy, the same policy, will be extended to other agricultural products.

● (1410)

The discretionary clauses of this bill allow the minister to determine what the levy shall be when the fund is in surplus, and what the levy shall be when the fund shows a deficit; but in no instance do they impose a limit. The bill suggests that in normal times there is to be a 2 per cent contribution by the producer; that is, 2 per cent of sales should be the producer's contribution. Yet when it comes to the discretionary power of the minister, he is not bound by the limitation of the 2 per cent levy. How will those discretionary powers be used? Will they be used one way in an election year and another way after the election? Is this a particular political ploy aimed at attracting the votes of a particular segment of Canada's population, while leaving the rest at a loose end? Some people in agriculture, particularly in eastern Canada, are inclined to think that it might be.

The government's concern as evidenced in this bill for the western farmer is in sharp contrast to its lack of concern with respect to the cost of feed grains and regularity of the delivery of feed grains to eastern Canada from the west. Certainly, the government's concern for western farmers is in sharp contrast to its concern for the agricultural feeding sector in eastern Canada, the ability of which to produce has been impaired to the extent that in many instances producers can no longer produce eggs, beef and pork products for Atlantic provinces' consumption as cheaply as producers in other parts of Canada can produce and deliver them to Atlantic provinces' points of delivery.

If we are to be concerned about the welfare of the western farmer, why should we not extend our concern to all farmers across Canada by not introducing ad hoc pieces of legislation such as this which are designed to fit particular situations such as the one we are discussing? Instead, let us bring in a blanket piece of legislation which will look after the whole field of agriculture. All agricultural producers are crying for this.

For the benefit of the hon. member for Assiniboia, I suggest that such a policy has been proposed many times in this House. I ask him to read the statements on policy which have emanated from the opposition in election after election, stating that security of income of the farmer is of primary concern to this party. We say that agriculture should be treated as one industry and not fragmented. Our policy would not pit one part of Canada against another but would be all-inclusive in its coverage.

I sincerely hope that under this legislation the grain farmer will not experience the problems which the potato producer, apple producer, grape producer and other producers all across Canada have faced when applying to the government for assistance. I hope that the discretionary power which is to be placed in the hands of the minister