

Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act

Mr. McIntosh: Yes, I agree.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. members might well be interested in the answer which the hon. member for Mercier (Mr. Boulanger) wishes to give, but I have some doubt that the question of the by-election in Assiniboia is relevant to the bill. It may be related, but I doubt that it is within the confines of the bill. Having said that, I may point out that I am not critical of the hon. member for Swift Current-Maple Creek (Mr. McIntosh). He has developed his contribution to the debate or the bill with reference to the by-election, but I do not think we should debate the point of the by-election at this time.

Mr. McIntosh: Mr. Speaker, I could go on for quite some time trying to put your mind at ease as to the reason this by-election in Assiniboia was not called, but I disagree with your view the by-election has no bearing on what is being said at present. I would be quite prepared to let the assistant whip of the Liberal party rise at this time, and I would forgo my time in the House if he would announce the date of the by-election in Assiniboia. I am sure that farmers in western Canada are waiting for the opportunity to show—

Mr. Boulanger: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. First, my point of order is that we are at present debating Bill C-239, which means that the hon. member is not in order. The second point is that the hon. member should know we should try to show some respect for the family of the hon. member who died a few weeks ago. We should wait some time before calling a by-election to give time to the family of the deceased to think of something else than an election.

Mr. Horner: But it is three months.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: May I again ask hon. members not to enter into a debate about the by-election, about whether it may or may not be held or when it will be held. The hon. member for Swift Current-Maple Creek has the floor. His reference to the by-election is relevant in the sense that he wanted to develop reasons why the government may or may not have called it, but let him do so only in relation to the bill before the House.

Mr. McIntosh: My only concern is that my constituency borders on the constituency of Assiniboia. Because constituents there do not have a member representing their riding, they have written me dozens of letters about the problems they are having with the present government, asking me if I could do something. I do not mind doing it, but when the assistant whip of the Liberal party pleads for more time, as he did, because of the death of the member representing that area, I wonder why he did not apply the same reasoning with regard to one of my colleagues on this side of the House, the former hon. member for Lisgar. They only waited six weeks at that time.

Mr. Horner: And the former hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker.]

Mr. McIntosh: I would forgo my time, Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member would get up and announce the date of the by-election in Assiniboia, otherwise I will continue.

The reason we are opposed to this bill is not that there are not some good parts in it, as I said yesterday. Most of my colleagues have spoken in favour of the bill to a certain degree. But my concern is that this bill, along with other agricultural legislation that this government is putting before the House, directly affects the small farmers of western Canada. I said yesterday that the basic premise behind this bill is to change the whole financial situation of small farmers in Canada. It will change it so that the loans small farmers have at present, which were promised interest free and which would be repaid in full if the government would only sell the product which they said they would sell, namely grain, would force farmers into bankruptcy. I say that based on what I understand has been the information given to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau).

Of the 430,000 farmers in Canada, there are 200,000 who will have to leave their farms. I could say a lot about what will happen to those 200,000 farmers whom this government is forcing off farms. They will go to the cities; they will be placed on relief rolls, and they will take welfare. No consideration is given to these people. So far as this government is concerned, the faster they get off the farms the better. This bill is one method by which they are going to force farmers off smaller farms. They are trying to force 200,000 of them into bankruptcy. Under this legislation the money which the farmer owes the government will be recallable on demand. Any time the operator of a small farm can get a few dollars for operating expenses he will not be allowed to keep them. The government will demand that the loan be repaid immediately. As I said yesterday, anyone who has been in business knows that you cannot operate unless you have operating capital. The government will take the operating capital away from the farmer with a small farm. This is the whole intention behind Bill C-239.

Mr. Gibson: Would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. McIntosh: What the hon. member knows about agriculture would fill a lot of books.

Mr. Gibson: I am not trying to be smart and I do not say I know much about the subject, but yesterday I had the benefit of hearing a farmer's group before the Committee on External Affairs. That group expressed great interest in the substance of this bill as a means of helping to marshall and plan marketing facilities for these farmers on small farms about whom the hon. member was speaking. Would he agree that there is some hope in that?

Mr. Ricard: To which bill is the hon. member referring?

Mr. Horner: We will be on that one next month.