

The huge debt loads on these farm families and their concern for the future would likely be shared by most in their situation. How they look at the future depends on their age. Older farmers, especially those who have survived recessions and droughts, are skeptical about the new GRIP initiative because they see the moving average, this 15-year term, as simply a guarantee that the prices will remain low. Many are not considering signing up for the program, but rather hope to see a continuation of deficiency payments until prices rise on their own sufficiently to cover the production costs on the farm.

Younger farmers are more likely to accept the GRIP program because they are so desperate for cash that any program that will get them through one more bad year can't be all bad. They are more concerned about the immediate than the future. I am somewhat surprised at that basic response from the younger farmers, who tell me that they are prepared to sign on to the GRIP program for the first few years when the financial return is expected to be high, but are likely to drop out after a year or two when the return is predicted to be much lower.

If GRIP is to be at all successful, this callous approach must be addressed and the problem corrected, because the entire program will collapse with a huge deficit and little ongoing on-farm support if participation of the young farmers is not maintained.

This is just one of the matters that the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture will have to look at when it gets this legislation to study next week.

There is also the question of whether the program will cause farmers to plant more acres of wheat in a year when prices are at rock bottom and when wheat is needed the least. The question was raised in late February by analysts with Ag Decision, a research group, which says that GRIP will dramatically change the way farmers will operate, and may influence the type of crops grown and the amount of land seeded. The analysts report they had expected a decrease of about 8 per cent in wheat acreage in 1991-92 but now expect it to increase by about 3 per cent. That concerns me because of my personal concern for the environment and the unfortunate but at this time necessary use of marginal land for crop production in the northern part of Saskatchewan.

### *Government Orders*

I am also concerned with the process which is bringing us GRIP and changing the face of agriculture support payments forever. The legislation in front of us today is enabling legislation. It is not the GRIP or the NISA programs, the details both of which are contained not in this legislation but in agreements which have yet to be signed by a number of the provinces, and in regulations which we may not see yet for another few months.

Details of the program are being sold to farmers across the west and are available, but not the fine print. We do not know if the programs will work; we do not know what they will cost, and we do not know if they indeed answer the problems that face us in the long term.

The federal government, using its marketplace-oriented master plan, outlined in its paper *Growing Together*, initiated the discussions and they consulted widely with the farm and industry groups.

However, Bill C-98 and the programs it established is scheduled to go into effect on April 1, less than three weeks away. Agreements are being signed with the provinces, farmers are being signed up, and Parliament has yet to give the authority to even enter into these negotiations. I fear the mistakes of the past are being repeated and that GRIP and NISA may turn out simply to be four letter versions of the GST, programs that are flawed and faulty but cannot be changed because the government has committed too much to them before the final assessment is in. GRIP in many ways parallels the New Democrats agriculture policy unveiled during the 1988 federal election campaign. We recognized then the need for a long-term stabilization policy that would protect farmers against losses caused by price declines of any kind and natural disasters which can strike farmers individually or collectively at any time.

In developing our policy, however, we differed from the government's current program in that we thought then and still do today that support for farmers should be based on cost of production and not on a 15-year moving average.

Our program would provide basic price guarantees for part of each year's sales that are consumed domestically or about 8,000 bushels.

I think the idea of a long-term income stabilization plan is good and that these programs are necessary. I only hope that the government is prepared to make the