

Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act

The minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board at that time was the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Trade and Commerce. He will remember the argument that I had with him. I told him, "You are going to bring farmers deeper and deeper into debt. This will severely hurt the small farmer." I said that in October, 1968. I said it later in 1968 and also in the early part of 1969. I said that the legislation would result in small farmers incurring debts that they would not be able to pay.

If one studies Bill C-239 one can clearly understand why they are increasing the interest rate on the amount eligible for repayment. It is because they have sunk the small farmer into debt. They have driven him from the farm. And then only within the last few days the Prime Minister stood up in Vancouver—the same man who made the speech in Winnipeg two years ago—and said we have to gear ourselves to a policy of net social benefit. Is it net social benefit to drive small farmers into the cities to live on welfare? I would think not.

The small farmer enjoys more psychological security living on his small farm than he ever will living on welfare in the air-polluted, water-polluted cities. On the farm he enjoys a better quality of life. He certainly enjoyed a better quality of life on the farm in 1968 before he was enticed and led to his own destruction by the Prime Minister, aided by the minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board.

What does this bill suggest? I would like all members to look at clause 12. What does clause 12 suggest? Higher interest rates—that's what it suggests. Who will pay them? It is not the farmer who can afford to pay, but the farmer who is already behind on repayment of his cash advances. That is when we soak him. We catch him when he is down and put him out of business. We force him to go into the cities, make him take a job or go on welfare. In any event, he must leave his farm. That is the purpose, the object of most of the farm legislation that has been introduced by the government and this cash advances legislation is a perfect example. If one studies the chronological order in which the government has proceeded with its farm legislation, you can see this is the way it is aimed, right through from October, 1968, up to Bill C-239.

Does a farmer get any indication from this bill as to how much he will be able to get as a cash advance on wheat? The farmer is now going into the seeding period. This bill covers rye, flax and rapeseed. Mr. Speaker, I notice this ugly head is rearing itself once again and paying attention. Does the farmer receive any indication of what he will receive as cash advance on the grain he is preparing to plant this month? I see the minister mouthing the word "Yes." I have to say the word "Yes" because I know from my experience in this House that mouthed words do not appear in *Hansard*; therefore, I have to interpret the words that the minister mouths. He mouthed the word "Yes," meaning that before spring planting farmers will know how much advance will be available under the six crops covered by this bill. Am I correct in that statement? I would like to see him nod his head on that statement.

[Mr. Horner.]

Mr. Lang: Half right.

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, if I were an American politician I would say I was in the ball-park, but I am not and I want to be right. Before this legislation passes I want the minister to stand up and say what is 100 per cent right. Will the farmers know how much in cash advances will be available to them with regard to the various crops, before spring seeding? Will there be half the value with regard to flaxseed, which runs in the neighbourhood of a little less than \$3 a bushel? Will that be available to them as a cash advance, now that flaxseed is coming under the bill? With regard to rapeseed—a very speculative crop, I might add—has the minister the foresight to predict that half the value of rapeseed under today's prices will be available through cash advances to farmers, before they plant rapeseed this spring?

How much will be available? If \$1 a bushel isn't available under wheat, how much will be? If 45 cents is not available under oats, how much will be? If 70 cents isn't available under barley, how much will be and how much will be the repayments of the farmers? Will they be increased, or reduced as the Prime Minister stated on June 2, 1968? These are questions that the farmers are asking themselves. But we are being asked to pass this legislation without any answers, and the minister in charge of the Wheat Board suggests I am half right. This is not good enough when you consider the problems the farmer has had in the past year.

The farmer has taken the advice the Prime Minister gave on June 2, 1968. He has taken the cash advances. He has taken more than half the price of the grain sold, in cash advances. He has accepted a reduced repayment. He stands in debt. As of April 24, 1970, the Canadian farmer had received \$228 million under cash advances. Since that date he has been attempting to repay it. How successful has he been?

Mr. Woolliams: How could he be successful, under this government?

Mr. Horner: How could he be successful, under this government? That is the crux of the problem, because this government has prohibited the farmer from delivering his grain. The minister must admit the facts. Let us take wheat, for example. Wheat is a major crop. The normal amount of wheat in commercial storage at this period of the year ranges up to 440 million bushels. What is the present situation, Mr. Speaker? It is down, in the neighbourhood of 340 million bushels; and that is 100 million bushels of empty storage.

• (9:50 p.m.)

Can the minister suggest that the cash advances would be as large and outstanding if they allowed the farmers to fill the commercial storage? Does he want me and other members of this House, no matter what they have to do with the agricultural industry, to believe that the agricultural industry could not repay their advances if he accepted the grain to fill the storage available? He cannot answer that question, Mr. Speaker, because he knows in his heart that the \$51 million advanced could be repaid,