

Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act

At that time the country was just about in the same mess as it is getting into today. Western Canada had almost an identical mess to that facing it today. But during the few years when we had a government that got out and did something about selling, the situation was resolved, and we can see that by the difference in the amounts used for loans on farm stored grains. That amount has increased since the present government took office, and in fact jumped sharply in the years 1967, 1968 and 1969. In fact it has almost tripled, indicating the great need of producers.

The original act was one of the first pieces of legislation introduced by the Conservative government. It was passed in November or December of that year, and at once became very useful to the farmers. We must consider the proposed amendments carefully because of the value of the legislation. I hope the government has given careful study to them, but I wonder when I see a clause in the bill dealing with interest rates.

True enough, Mr. Speaker, some people took advantage of the fact that interest-free money could be obtained under the terms of the legislation, but they made up only a small percentage of the farming population. Prior to the introduction of that legislation, people had to go to the banks to get loans on their farm-stored grain. They almost had to sign their lives away in order to get a bank loan. They had to pay interest on those loans, and they had to have a certain amount of assets before they could get loans no matter how much grain they had in storage. As a result, many people appreciated the introduction of the legislation. I remember seeing people coming out of banks after applying for loans, with documents that they had to have signed and with affidavits that they had to have attested. We would not like that situation to return. As I say, we must look at the proposed amendments and proceed cautiously, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. members who represent constituencies in western Canada know that farmers are really confused. Right now when they should have some idea of what they are going to seed they simply do not have a clue what to seed. The Lift program, instituted last year by the government, created too much confusion and did little, if any, good. This year people are still confused. Up in the northern part of Saskatchewan where I live there is a feed shortage this year. There is a shortage of barley and oats. It is a mixed farming country, and following encouragement by the government and the introduction of the Lift program, many acres were put into summer fallow that otherwise would have been seeded with barley and oats. If people had not turned those acres into summer fallow at least they would have their own feed, and right now there is a good market for barley but they have none to sell.

I would like to show you my file of complaints with respect to the Lift program, Mr. Speaker. People did not understand that program. I do not really think the government, and in particular the minister, understood it either. It has created terrible confusion in western Canada. I can show you complaints that I have received

[Mr. Cadieu.]

from young people who would like to enter dairying but they cannot get a dairy quota. It used to be the case that if young people had an old cow and a cream can they could get a start in the industry, but they cannot do that any more. I believe the government's policies are directed to getting farmers off the land.

The other day I was at a meeting of farmers and heard one gentleman ask those present, "Do you realize every second one of you will soon be off the land?" People were looking around at their neighbours trying to decide which ones would be leaving next. That is the case in western Canada in the dairy industry. The present mess in the hog industry has never been equalled. Then there is also discontinuance of the PFAA to consider, and the thing that worries me so much is that it will be a long while before many farmers can get crop insurance. PFAA kept many small farmers on their land, but that will no longer be the case.

There is confusion in western Canada today in all sectors of agriculture, and the worst confusion I have seen has been caused by Bill C-176. I think both ministers who are sitting opposite should go out to western Canada and see the situation for themselves. I do not profess to be always right. I like to study the different bills proposed by the government because I think that is our job. But, Mr. Speaker, just the other day I attended a meeting of 350 farmers engaged in livestock and mixed farming, and I did not find one single person there who supported Bill C-176.

Mr. Paproski: You won't either.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I am following the hon. member's speech with much interest. It is obviously a sincere and well prepared speech, but I should advise the hon. member not to stray too far from the bill which is now before the House. I would hope that at this time we would not get involved in a discussion on Bill C-176. There will be other opportunities to consider that piece of legislation. At the moment, hon. members should relate their contributions to the bill which is before the House and not get involved in debate on Bill C-176.

Mr. Cadieu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I realize that, but I would like to point out that it is a part of the government's program. It all fits in, just like a glove, but I will abide by your ruling. Surely this government knows the problems that their agricultural legislation create for western Canada. When you look at the whole plan it is just one problem after another.

● (3:30 p.m.)

I listened to a former cabinet minister speak over the radio only last Sunday. Although he did not refer to this bill, the hon. member for Duvernay (Mr. Kierans) exposed this government's lack of organization. I should like also to mention a bulletin from the Canada Department of Agriculture which arrived in my office today.