

Agricultural Policies

research into feed grains and crop insurance, which was introduced in 1960. He said the Agricultural Stabilization Act was introduced in 1958-59, but it was actually 1957. He mentioned the Farm Credit Act, but this was revised in 1959. He also mentioned debt consolidation and this is a present policy made necessary because of the mishandling of the agricultural industry by this government. He went on to mention feed grain assistance but this has been in existence since 1942, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Olson: 1944.

Mr. Horner: He could have mentioned a number of other things. He painted a vivid picture of how the opposition is holding up Bill C-197. But Bill C-197 has not been in this House since May 19, and as near as we can find out it will not be brought back until June 11. The minister talks about it going before the agricultural committee, but yesterday the chairman of that committee admitted he was having difficulty in getting a quorum. There has not been a quorum in that committee since March 26, and yesterday afternoon we sat for three-quarters of an hour waiting for a quorum. Most of the opposition members were there, it was government members who were not. Why rush this bill into committee when he knows that it cannot be dealt with without a quorum? The government has tried to tell the nation that we have been holding up legislation, whereas we have been examining it thoroughly in accordance with our duty.

Let us see whether Bill C-197 has been requested by the farm organizations. In my hand I hold a news release put out by the Alberta Wheat Pool, and this is what the president, Mr. G. L. Harrold, had to say on May 29:

• (2:30 p.m.)

Government Bills C-196 (Canada Grain Act) and C-197 (Farm Products Marketing Act) both provide for vague, sweeping authority to be vested with appointed officials. While the bills provide for consultation with, and opportunity for representation by agricultural producers, they fail to require direct policy participation by those most directly affected, the producers.

Canadian agricultural production is in the hands and under the management of about 150,000 owner-operators. They have demonstrated a desire and ability to manage agricultural production in Canada extremely well, and have rapidly improved the efficiency of the industry. Legislation affecting their markets is of extreme interest to producers. All such legislation should be based on the needs and desires of producers, who should have a direct voice in preparation and operation of such policy.

Bill C-197 will deny the farmers such a voice. The motion before the House indicates that the government ought to be prepared to listen to farmers. The government ought to reverse its present policies. What are some of them? Consider Operation Lift, which the minister did not mention. He skipped around it. It will bring about a drastic reduction in wheat acreage. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) said that this program will encourage increased production of such commodities as rapeseed and flax. I question that, Mr. Speaker. This two-headed monster running our agriculture—on a previous occasion I referred to it as a cross-eyed rooster—is thinking negatively on questions of agriculture. The two ministers responsible do not want to understand the agricultural industry. They are merely following some of the policies laid down by the task force on agriculture.

Mr. Lang: Has the hon. member any new lines in mind?

Mr. Horner: If the minister will be quiet for a minute I will mention lots of new lines of policy. And what did the task force on agriculture recommend? It recommended that we establish a transition policy to keep farmers out of wheat production. On page 35 of the report, the task force recommends that all coarse grains produced in a given crop year should be sold in that crop year. When this question was put to the grain companies, they said the suggestion was ridiculous. Yet this is what the task force recommended. That task force was headed by five academics, four of them coming from eastern Canada who probably had never seen a wheat farm. There were two members from Quebec, two from Ontario and one, a Socialist, from the University of Manitoba.

In his speech, the Minister of Agriculture said pointedly that if we could solve our wheat problem we could probably solve the problems related to other commodities. The government thinks Operation Lift will help. That operation merely shows that the government is thinking negatively. It does not want us to expand any agricultural operations whatever, but wants us all to cut back. The minister talked about growth in the entire agricultural industry. The farmers, it is said, will be better off financially. How can they be better off if their production is to be curtailed? That shows how negatived is the government's thinking. Last year 4.5 million acres were taken out of production, and now