

Prairie Grain Stabilization Act

that way because there is a clause in the bill which requires a periodic review. They are afraid that the effects of this bill will not be reviewed until that time limit is up. I do not think this is true. I know that all members of this House are sincerely concerned about the agricultural industry and the effect economic conditions are having on it.

The suggestion that we should base contributions on net income as against gross income is very interesting. It is a suggestion to which I, personally, gave an awful lot of thought. However, I have never been able to determine what the net cost of production is in many segments of agriculture. I agree that methods are being improved and that we can get a better picture of what those costs are. Nevertheless, at present I suggest that there are very few producers who can give a definite figure as to how much it costs to produce various grains. This amendment suggests that deductions should be made on the basis of the net income of producers. The bill provides that the payments are to be based on grain sales proceeds. It has been suggested that we should change the bill and base the contributions on net income. We know, and it has been suggested many times in this House, that there are producers who have not had a net income in the past few years.

Mr. Benjamin: That's under Liberal governments.

Mr. Cobbe: That would mean, in those cases, that there would be no contribution to the fund which, in turn, according to the other parts of the bill, would mean, basically, that there would be no payments to those farmers from the fund since the payments are based on the amount contributed to the fund. On that basis, Mr. Speaker, I cannot see that it is possible for me to support such an amendment to the bill. I say that because, basically, we would be helping only those who have enough income to contribute to the fund. Many, many producers in the immediate past would not have been able to contribute to the fund. There are some in that position even at present. Therefore, they would not be able to take advantage of this bill. For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I personally cannot see how I can support this amendment.

Mr. Skoberg: Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Cobbe: Certainly.

Mr. Skoberg: Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if the hon. member was suggesting that the majority of farmers today are not keeping accurate records of their operating costs. Was he suggesting that a little while ago?

Mr. Cobbe: Mr. Speaker, I was not suggesting that. I know that in the immediate past there has been a tremendous effort on the part of producers to keep accurate figures covering all their operations. Nevertheless, it is still very difficult, in my opinion, to determine costs. You get different answers from many producers about the actual costs of producing various types of grain.

Mr. Benjamin: Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member permit another question? I am wondering if I heard the hon. member correctly. Did he say in his speech that since some farmers did not have a net income, they therefore

would not be able to make contributions to the fund and would not be eligible to receive payments from the fund? If he is saying that, may I ask him whether he is not aware that if a farmer makes grain sales he will make contributions to the fund whether or not he gets a net income?

Mr. Cobbe: Mr. Speaker, may I say this in answer to that question. I was referring to the effect of the amendment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Matte (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, I admit that I am not particularly well acquainted with all the technical consequences of Bill C-244. However, I must state my views and the comments of my constituents on that problem concerning grain producers, especially those of western Canada.

Mr. Speaker, we must consider here the necessity of removing some prejudices among eastern and western producers. Some of those prejudices are sometimes kept alive by the government. I would not say wilfully, Mr. Speaker, but it amounts to the same thing. It is extremely unfortunate for the fellowship which should exist in the farming community of Canada, whatever the area concerned. It is also unfortunate for the Canadian consumer who at the present time cannot take advantage of the plentiful crops offered by the producer.

In a country where production is so easy, where enormous quantities of all sorts of good things and all sorts of food products are available, it is inadmissible that the consumer cannot really benefit by it. And he does not benefit by it. Why? For the very reason that there appear to be some basic difficulties in the matter of organization and procedure and because the principles that would promote distribution according to the needs of the Canadian people are not being applied.

I would like to give an example. The eastern producer, especially the one from Quebec, finds it absolutely impossible to understand why it is so difficult for him to obtain at a reasonable price products that are overabundant in the western part of his country, when he has an extremely hard time in making ends meet. Of course, he comes to the conclusion that the government favours the western producer. It is unfortunate that these producers should think so, but apparently they don't quite know what—

• (4:20 p.m.)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order. I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member but, having listened attentively from the beginning of his remarks I tend to feel he is wandering considerably from the subject. We are at the committee report stage and the two motions before us relate specifically to clauses 2 and 3. It is quite difficult, at this stage of the proceedings, to allow the hon. member to deal with the overall subject of the grain market, of marketing, of agriculture in the East and in the West. The Chair is quite willing to grant him a maximum of latitude but would invite him, as soon as he can, to arrive at a conclusion which will at least relate his remarks to the motions now before us.

Mr. Matte: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your kind words. I may seem to be drifting away from the amend-