

Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act

northern part of the three prairie provinces. Many of the producers have been asking for more freedom to deliver oats into markets that they have found, such as double cleaned oats for the race horse markets of the western United States. They are competing very well with oats from Minnesota. We have the opportunity to put those oats into that California market at a lower price than our competitors, but those producers are having difficulty in getting permits from the Wheat Board to deliver to those markets. In fact, they have found it impossible in some cases.

We have the opportunity to produce oats for human consumption, which is done very little in western Canada. In fact, we import a good deal of that product into Canada at the present time. There are entrepreneurs in western Canada who are prepared to take the risk to produce that product in our own market and believe they can also market it into the United States. However, they are having difficulty getting permits from the Wheat Board to do so.

I believe it is time for the Wheat Board to open up to individuals who can find markets in the United States and to give them permits to see if they can succeed. I believe it will work well and the opportunity is here for the Wheat Board to be more lenient and open with the permits it offers to individual farmers and small producers who, on their own initiative, can find markets for oats in other countries. I believe it is time for the Wheat Board to take this into consideration.

This would be conducive to the growing and marketing of specialty crops and products from specialty crops. The Prairies have done an excellent job in diversifying and producing such commodities as canola, a rapeseed product developed through research, and finding excellent markets through the specialty crops system. Many producers are now growing lentils, birdseed and canary seed. I believe that the rapid expansion in the horticultural area means a great future for Canadian farmers. I hope our marketing system will bend to make sure that farmers can take advantage of any opportunities for their products.

I support the amendments to the Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act. As soon as we hear the views of Members of Parliament, I believe we should pass this Bill because many farmers in the Prairies will take advantage of these amendments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments? Debate.

● (1220)

Mr. Bill Gottselig (Moose Jaw): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in my place today to speak to the amendments to the Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act. These amendments display the continuing concern of our Government. Our Government was elected in September of 1984 at which time we were given a mandate for reform. Revising the Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act is one more indication of the concern we have in terms of acting in the best interests of western farmers in particular. The amendments to the Prairie

Grain Advance Payments Act indicate that we take our responsibilities seriously. I commend Hon. Members, particularly on this side of the House, for the ideas they have put forward. I think this indicates that we take our responsibilities seriously. It shows our concern for the economic well-being of our agricultural producers generally. We recognize the great place that agriculture plays in our country.

Canadians spend over \$40 billion a year on food—a considerable amount of money. We have to thank our farmers for their efficiency in producing this food at a very low price. We do not always recognize the input of farmers when we open the fridge and take out some milk, or cheese, or when the meat goes on the table. I would like to pay tribute to those agricultural producers who are producing under sometimes adverse conditions but, nevertheless, very efficiently. They are showing that they can compete with anyone in the world when it comes to producing food on an efficient basis.

For us as prairie farmers 41 per cent of our cash receipts come from the sale of wheat. Wheat is king in Saskatchewan, particularly in the area I represent. However, there are many problems that exist beyond our borders, and other Members have dealt at some length with them. We rely on exports for the largest percentage of our sales. Over 80 per cent of our production must be exported into a world market, a market which is presently congested and in which granaries are overflowing. Many countries which used to import our wheat are now exporting wheat themselves.

The area which I have the honour to represent contains some of the finest farm land in the world. I am sure that everyone has heard of the great Regina Plains. This is an area of level, fertile and highly productive soil farmed by people who can compete with anyone in the world. My riding contains most of the irrigation in Saskatchewan which allows us to produce a wide variety of specialty crops as efficiently or more efficiently than anyone else in the world.

Grain producers across Canada are caught in a vicious cost-price squeeze, largely as a result of the shoot-out between the European Common Market and the U.S.A. We must provide support for these agricultural producers. We do not have the luxury of choice in the matter.

During the last recess and during the recent election in Saskatchewan I spoke to many of my constituents. Members of the Saskatchewan electorate recognize the support they have received from the provincial Government led by Premier Devine. They have endorsed the provincial Government's past record by giving him a new mandate. The deficiency payment which was first announced by the federal Government in the Speech from the Throne and which was later mentioned by the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) in the House, as well as by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise), is a recognition by the federal Government of the need to provide some support to our agricultural producers. My constituents have indicated their appreciation for this announcement. They have also indicated their appreciation for the priority that agriculture is receiving from the Government. In simple terms it is a matter of survival