

Western Grain Stabilization

was deliberately engineered so that they could have closer consultation.

Mr. Lang: But that was a reasonable time; this is just a filibuster.

Mr. Dinsdale: Everything the government does is reasonable—in its eyes alone. We leave the decision in this regard to the people of Western Canada who have demonstrated in no uncertain terms how they feel about the government's circumlocution in this respect.

● (1520)

In view of the matter I was discussing with respect to compulsory membership, I hope that not only will the ministers responsible go out and communicate with producers, but also when this legislation gets to the committee stage that there will be some direct consultation between the committee in the field and farmer producers of western provinces, because this was one of the major issues the last time the matter of compulsory membership came up, and it is still not completely clarified in the legislation as it has been reintroduced.

I wish to deal with another matter which should be brought to the attention of farmers of Canada as they contemplate this bill—it has already been said that this is a very complex bill—and that is the problem of regionalization. Several hon. members have referred to it, and because it has already been discussed I can be brief in my treatment of this subject. It is one of the major objections to the bill, and it is a carryover from the 1971 legislation.

This is one of the objections which forced the government to withdraw the bill in 1971, after the minister responsible for the Wheat Board indicated that it was great legislation and that the members of the opposition were negligent in their duty if they did not allow its quick passage through the House.

As I read the new legislation, payment to producers will only take place if the totality of the prairie provinces suffers from severe crop damage or depressed markets. The lumping of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and some parts of British Columbia prevents an individual producer or localized region within a province from obtaining compensation if crop damage occurs. The minister has responded to this criticism by saying that the plan is not a form of insurance, but is a stabilization program. In the *Globe and Mail* of December 7, 1974, it was reported that the minister said at a press conference that he would propose continued study to see whether more regionalization could be put into the program. He added that too much regionalization, however, would make the plan little more than normal crop insurance.

Some hon. members have put forward the suggestion during this debate that perhaps this would be a more effective approach to the problem, and certainly that is an issue which can only be resolved by direct consultation with farmers. As reported in the *Globe and Mail* on December 7, the minister said, that this is not a crop insurance scheme, and that it is meant very much to complement existing insurance schemes.

Because this aspect of the bill is of great importance I feel that the minister should confirm in the House if his

[Mr. Dinsdale.]

proposal for a study into regionalization of the legislation has been initiated and, if so, when this study will be tabled or, possibly, presented to committee. Perhaps we will hear spokesmen from the government side who can respond to that point this afternoon. The government has been strangely silent in the House during this debate. It does not have much support in western Canada, that is true, but I think it has an obligation to speak in this House as well as on the hustings, as has been the case for the past few weeks.

Some departmental officials have stated that serious and frequent meetings took place among producer groups, bureaucrats, and government officials before the final drafting of the bill was completed. Also, localization of the stabilization program was a contentious issue in 1970, and it seems that the minister is responding too little and too late to this problem. Only after the bill was tabled in the House for first reading did the minister announce a proposal to study regionalization of the legislation.

These are just two examples of the kind of criticism which can be directed at the bill. It is similar to criticism which came forward in growing crescendo as the debate proceeded back in 1971. At that time spokesmen for the government complained that opposition members from western Canada were conducting a filibuster. We are hearing the same comments today. It is not a filibuster at all. We are pointing out specific problems in the proposed legislation as it is now enshrined in Bill C-41, and I suggest that it is incumbent upon the government to respond to those specific observations rather than just to make blanket charges as it is doing on the hustings. There have been some rumblings about it this afternoon, but in the main charges that opposition members are delaying the progress of this legislation have been made on the hustings. The government claims that this bill is so good that it would immediately establish the government's reputation once and for all in western Canada. That, of course, is patent nonsense.

The last word I want to say at this stage is that when the bill goes to committee there should be a dialogue, not only between the government and the people and between the bureaucrats and the people, but also between the elected representatives of the farmers serving on the agricultural committee and the people, so that we can deal with some of the obvious weaknesses, and many of the hidden weaknesses which can only appear as the debate on the subject continues.

Mr. Bert Hargrave (Medicine Hat): Madam Speaker, I am delighted to take part in this debate. It was my privilege to be in my riding for most of last week and I had an opportunity to discuss with feed grain producers and wheat grain producers some of the aspects of this bill and Bill C-50, which is still at committee stage, and is the responsibility of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan).

I will refer to some of the comments and reactions of my constituents, but I want to start out by reading what I think is the best one liner which presently describes this most important new bill. It is taken from the February 1 issue of the "Rural Councillor", which is the official publication of the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities. Anyone from the west knows that that is a very