

legislation. Again I say this is a small item, but one of those things that can mean a lot in terms of making the program function smoothly.

Members today have discussed the question of "voluntariness" and the series of combinations and permutations of that. I will discuss that in a moment in more detail. In moving toward this voluntary concept or feature of the stabilization plan, this is not an easy thing to do if you want to make the plan totally effective, but it is the kind of thing I think western Canadian farmers will appreciate.

In addition we have as part of the stabilization plan the creation of a five-member advisory committee composed of farmers or farm representatives who will advise on the administration of the plan.

We have heard some reference tonight about the administrative costs of the plan. I know the minister will want to say more about that, probably in his concluding remarks or before the committee, but it is clear that the cost of administering this plan will not be borne by the farmers of western Canada out of their stabilization fund, but rather by the federal treasury.

Another interesting thing, and I am sure this will be of interest to the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar, is that payments to the producers will be exempt from legal process.

Again, the solvency of the stabilization fund, another small but interesting point, is guaranteed by the federal treasury. In addition, whenever the fund is in a surplus position the federal government will be paying interest to the fund. This is a series of small features, if you like, but features I think farmers will be interested in knowing about as they become more familiar with the stabilisation plan; features which should make this bill in some measure at least attractive to them.

I have listened very carefully to most of the debate we have had in the past two or three days on Bill C-41, and it seems to me there have been three main criticisms coming from people across the way. The first one, and the one that seems to have occupied the most time during the comments we have been hearing, is that the proposal is complicated. Well, Madam Speaker, so is the problem. We have had a longstanding and recurrent pattern of grain incomes in the west being up one year and down the next. As I said earlier, you cannot be happy about the good times for fear of how bad the bad times will be. You only have to look at the pattern of grain incomes for the past quarter of a century, since the second world war, to see that gyrating line going up and down and up and down. As the hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin) pointed out, this issue of how to deal with that has been on the minds of farmers and western Canadians generally for years. That is so because when farm incomes go up and down so does the entire economy of that particular part of Canada.

This problem has been on the minds of western Canadians not just for the past five years or 15 years or 20 years. The problem goes back many decades. It is one that I suppose in a way has compounded itself over time. So we have a serious problem with this fluctuating pattern of incomes in western Canada, and it is difficult to attack it effectively. We have had piecemeal proposals in the past

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that, on the periphery, have attempted to do something, but there have been no quick, simple or easy solutions.

It is important, as hon. members opposite and members on this side of the House have suggested publicly and privately, to provide information on the complexities of the program to farmers in order to get their reaction, and explain the details to make sure that everyone who can be affected has an adequate understanding of what the proposal is all about. However, simply to say it is complicated and complex, or that you have not had time to read the lengthy bill, is not a valid criticism.

I suppose we could say that if the answer had been quick, simple and easy, even that administration of 15 years ago, which sat in this House with the biggest majority of all in history, might have been lucky enough to stumble onto the solution, but it did not because the problem was a little bit beyond it.

The other criticisms that have been mentioned tonight, which I think are more logical and more interesting, and ones I want to give rather considerable attention to as we go through the committee work, involve the matter of dealing with the voluntary nature of the plan and its greater regionalization.

The voluntary aspect seems to have two sides, and they were alluded to at least indirectly by the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar. First of all there is the matter of the producer who comes into the program after it is in place, whether two years or five years from now, or two weeks after the bill is proclaimed. What is his position? As the bill stands at the moment it would indicate that he is included in the calculations.

There seems to be some logic in looking at the suggestions that have come forward from farm organizations, and others, that under the proposal the new farmer starting out after the plan has been put into place should have some option to decide to opt out of the program. I would very much want to look at that particular suggestion in more detail when this will no doubt be put to us by farm groups appearing before the standing committee, and when it is discussed by members around that table. There seems to be some substantial argument for extending the voluntary aspect of the plan to include that particular person.

There is another aspect to which the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar referred, and which was passed over as well by the hon. member for Rocky Mountain (Mr. Clark). This aspect relates to the fellow who is in the plan one year, out the next, then wants back in, then wants out, and then wants back in again. He is the "inner and outer", the fellow who, I suppose, would want to take advantage of the stabilization plan when it suits his income position, but really does not want to contribute to it or have any investment in its future when things are going well, because at that particular moment in time he does not feel the necessity for a stabilization program.

I will want to look at that latter proposition very carefully before moving toward any kind of concession on that point. I think it is important to allow the producer to change his mind if he has decided to opt out, and to make application to come under the plan, but whether we should continue indefinitely so that the producer can decide to be