

extracting large sums of money from the Canadian public by improper methods. I will be watching with interest to discover what instructions will be given regarding the recovery of money in the cases at hand.

I will leave this issue with the minister, asking him to call my views to the attention of the Wheat Board. I do not ask the Wheat Board or those involved in the recovery of these advances to extend leniency to people who are able to pay and should pay. It is my experience—I end on the same note as I started—that people involved in 12 to 14-hour days as agriculturalists, producing and harvesting crops, basically pay their debts. I think it is very unfair, under these conditions, for the Canadian Wheat Board to go ahead with wholesale prosecutions and imposition of costs without making a careful investigation of each case.

I know the minister will tell me there were investigations, but I made it a point to find out the extent to which the Wheat Board went to scrutinize and examine each case to determine the facts. These are things that cannot be done by correspondence; it is necessary to make a very careful observation and I think this was not done in most cases. I know many of these farmers personally. Last year was the first time for many years there was not only a good crop but an opportunity to harvest the crop and obtain a fair cash flow. Many of these people were compelled to pay the original debt, a very large amount of interest and an excessive measure of cost. I think this is unfair, under the circumstances.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. Members:** Question.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Agriculture.

\* \* \*

## AGRICULTURAL STABILIZATION ACT

### AMENDMENTS TO PROVIDE FOR DEFINITION OF AGRICULTURAL COMMODITY AND BASE PRICE

The House resumed, from Wednesday, June 11, consideration of Bill C-50, to amend the Agricultural Stabilization Act, as reported (with amendments) from the Standing Committee on Agriculture; and motion No. 4 (Mr. Towers for Mr. Horner).

**Mr. Gordon Ritchie (Dauphin):** Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner), I should like to speak briefly on this amendment which is:

That Bill C-50, an act to amend the Agricultural Stabilization Act, be amended by deleting subclause 5(2) between lines 10 to 18 on page 4.

The hon. member for Crowfoot was voicing the feeling that the board could in fact institute supply management, going beyond the powers set up in the act, to stabilize agricultural commodities. I think it is very important that this matter be at least discussed. I did not have the benefit

## Agricultural Stabilization Act

of being on the committee to hear the discussion. When governments set up boards of this kind, they are given certain powers to be exercised in a certain way. This board is to exercise its powers to stabilize the price of agricultural commodities. Prices can be stabilized in various ways. The classic way in the past, which I think this measure pursues, is by payments to the producers when the price of a commodity falls below a certain level. The purpose of such payments is to prevent abnormal hardship. Supposedly, the price falls below the cost of production and this results in an oversupply; the government then intervenes to prevent the growers from a disastrous situation, thus reducing the hardship and perhaps even preventing many of the producers from going into bankruptcy.

There are other ways of stabilizing commodity prices. If a commodity is in oversupply it can be stabilized by reducing production or reducing the amount of the commodity reaching the market. If a sufficient quantity of the commodity is not allowed to reach the market; perhaps by means of a quota system, then the commodity price is indirectly stabilized. The price would then presumably rise and there would be no payout by the government. I think what the hon. member for Crowfoot had in mind was preventing the board from moving in this latter way instead of relying on price assistance to stabilize commodity prices. Perhaps he felt the board might somehow become involved in supply management which is something the legislation does not give it the power to do.

It is my understanding that there have been discussions in this regard. Perhaps the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) feels this bill does not give the board the powers which the hon. member fears and to which his amendment relates. I think this is a very real fear and it is important that the matter be clarified. If the hon. member's amendment were accepted, then certainly no government board or agency could enter into supply management unless and until additional legislation had been passed in this House. I ask hon. members to bear in mind the great struggle we had with Bill C-176, which would have imposed marketing boards at the will of the governor in council whenever the prime minister and his cabinet decided to name certain commodities.

● (1620)

I think it is extremely important that the minister clarify the powers of the bill as presently written, in order to make sure the fears of the hon. member for Crowfoot are not realized and an agricultural board, acting on its own, could not enter the supply management field in regard to a given commodity. I believe the House and the producers of this country do not want supply management marketing unless the farmers agree to it. This is the position taken not only by me but by the rest of my party.

**Mr. Don Mazankowski (Vegreville):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to say a few words on this amendment. I appreciate the fact that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) indicated in his speech here, as well as in committee, that we need have no fear that he would over-extend his powers and become a dictator so far as Canadian agriculture is concerned. That may very well be. I think the Minister of Agriculture is an honourable man and an honourable Minister of Agriculture, but having said that it