

payment applications; high-yield producers will be able to obtain larger cash advances due to the method of calculation based on grain stored as opposed to acreage and quota; and interest rates on direct repayments and defaulted accounts will be set in relation to current interest rates.

I know that it has been said many times; however, it is quite true and worthy of repetition. Our farmers are among the most efficient and productive in the world. It is our duty to provide programs and legislation which support our producers through times of depressed international markets, something over which they have no control.

I urge all Members to give speedy passage to these amendments. The sooner we act, the sooner our farmers will benefit.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there questions or comments? The Hon. Member for Swift Current—Maple Creek (Mr. Wilson).

Mr. Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek): Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate my colleague, the Hon. Member for Dauphin—Swan River (Mr. White), on a useful contribution to the debate on Bill C-12. I noted in his remarks that he outlined a number of initiatives that the Government has undertaken in support of western and, indeed, Canadian agriculture, a number of programs which will particularly assist grain producers over this difficult period. I think most Canadians would view these as, hopefully, short-term measures pending a return to sanity in the world grain markets. I am wondering if the Hon. Member has in mind any long-term solutions. He mentioned a number of what we hope will be short-term initiatives which the Government has undertaken on the home front. What does he envision happening in terms of a long-term solution to these problems?

Mr. White: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. He is quite right. Besides recently reducing input costs and developing immediate support programs such as the \$1 billion support program, the Government has been working very hard on international solutions. One must look at three recent examples in this regard.

First, the Prime Minister placed agriculture on the agenda at the economic summit in Tokyo. Second, there was the meeting on the West Coast of grain exporters initiated by the Minister of State for the Canadian Wheat Board. Third, there were the efforts of the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) in placing the topic of agricultural subsidies on the agenda for the upcoming GATT discussions, which is something very important to Canadian agriculture. Most recently, there was announced a multi-billion dollar grain sale to the Soviet Union. I think we have proven that as a Government we have a long-term commitment to agriculture and that we are genuinely interested in the future of Canadian agriculture.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the comments which have been made by the Hon. Member for Dauphin—Swan River (Mr. White), I wish to ask either the Hon. Member, or perhaps another Member, the following question.

Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act

Do I understand correctly that the Government intends to vote against the motion which is presently before the House? This was a commitment made by the Government House Leader and Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Mazankowski) just before lunch. I am simply seeking clarification with respect to whether or not government Members will stick to their words. Is the Hon. Member for Dauphin—Swan River able to respond to my question?

Mr. White: Mr. Speaker, my interest lies in the fact that my point of view on behalf of Manitoba farmers be set out before the House. I am interested in having this Bill passed as expeditiously as possible.

Mr. Lewis: So are we all.

Mr. Len Gustafson (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a privilege for me to speak on Bill C-12, an Act to amend the Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act. To bring into perspective the importance of this Bill in relation to farmers, we must look at the situation on the Prairies and on the farm. I have just spent some time in the riding of Assiniboia, which is the riding I have the opportunity to represent. This riding produces 40 per cent of all the wheat grown in Canada.

We have had a history of problems in my riding. We have had drought. There have been problems of international priority which the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) addressed in Tokyo. However, particularly in relation to the Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act, we have a surplus of wheat on the Prairies. There are piles of wheat on the farms. Our Government is trying to move in terms of legislation which will deal with this situation, that is, through advance payments to farmers.

● (1540)

This morning I was very surprised to hear members of the Opposition trying to play down the importance of the Bill before the House. It was not long after the Government came into power that it made a move to amend the Western Grain Stabilization Act, thus making payments available to farmers. It was not long before it made a move to increase the amount of the advance payments to farmers from \$15,000 to \$30,000. The importance of this legislation is that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) will be able to act efficiently and quickly to deal with the needs of agriculture.

I would like to speak about the record of the Progressive Conservative Party. Not since the days of John Diefenbaker have we seen a Government or a Prime Minister reacting to the needs of agriculture the way this Government and Prime Minister have. Members of the Opposition continually challenge the Government's record. Let us look at that record.

First, I would like to say that Canadian farmers can compete fairly with farmers around the world. However, Canadian farmers cannot compete with unfair competition on the part of the U.S. Treasury and the European Economic