

Prairie Grain Stabilization Act

I could draw on many statements from different sources in this country that spell out in detail what I am talking about. The Manitoba pool elevators did not hesitate to criticize the stabilization plan. They passed a resolution at their December, 1970, meeting dealing with the stabilization plan. The resolution reads:

Whereas Mr. Lang is urging the immediate passage of his grain stabilization plan through the House of Commons;

And whereas a lack of information to the western farmers on detail, and implications of the proposed plan are not available nor forthcoming;

Be it resolved that Manitoba pool elevators urge our provincial government and all Western MPs to do everything possible to delay passage of this bill until farmers are fully aware of the contents of the bill and what benefit it will be to the farmer.

This resolution was forwarded to all Members of Parliament, including the minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board. It appears from this resolution that the Manitoba pool elevators are questioning whether the stabilization program proposed in this legislation is really telling the agricultural producers what may happen if the plan goes into effect. They suggest that serious consideration be given to this type of stabilization program.

The attempt by the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Gleave) at the outset of this debate to divide the bill would have made it more worth while discussing. We could have dealt with the bill in two areas, instead of suggesting that because we are going to hand out \$560 to an individual producer this is enough to make members vote for the bill. I have some figures from the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. I realize that they were quoted last Friday. I think it will be sufficient to read the net farm income for three of the prairie provinces. In 1967 the figure for Manitoba was \$154,392,000; in 1970 it was \$78,631,000. The 1967 figure for Saskatchewan was \$354,896,000, and \$202,718,000 for 1970. For Alberta, the 1967 figure was \$282,953,000, and \$226,231,000 for 1970.

When talking about stabilization, the government should be asked whether it is using the 1970 or 1967 figures with regard to stabilizing farm income. I am sure the minister will have something to say about this situation when he winds up the debate, whenever that may be. Although the government talks about an average five years, the fact remains that there have been terrific differences in the figures from 1967 to 1970. This situation can again occur, if we use the figures put out by DBS.

The National Farmers Union have clearly pointed out the situation. They have stressed the importance of stabilization payments being based on realized net farm income rather than gross farm income. Surely the minister realizes the difference between net and gross income. I am sure the agricultural producers of this country will not hesitate to state their costs of production. The difference between net and gross has definitely been missed by the minister and the cabinet in general. I quote from the National Farmers Union "National Newsletter" as follows:

The net income base is essential if the plan is to help individual farmers and rural communities.

Hon. members with constituencies composed of rural and urban areas realize that the people in both areas are

[Mr. Skoberg.]

concerned about the net income that individual producers will receive. The government believes it can talk about gross income and completely forget about net income.

• (8:20 p.m.)

An article in the *Financial Post* of March 13, 1970, talks about the government's new big farm policy. It may be "big farm" for some individuals who may be lucky enough to become big farmers, but in the area I come from we are still concerned about the basic, individual farmer. In many areas throughout Canada today, particularly in the west, we are concerned about the basic farmer, the part he plays in the community in which he is involved, the type of recreation he enjoys and contributes to, and the type of income he must receive to make his a viable and economic rural community. The article reads in part.

The federal cabinet has approved a broad national plan designed to speed up the exodus from Canada's farms and encourage larger-scale farm operations.

Larger-scale farm operations, to me, really means corporate farms and it would appear that this government is hell-bent on a program of ensuring that corporate farming will take over from the individual farmers we have always had. I am also of the opinion that the rural people in our agricultural economy are very frightened of this stabilization program because they feel that the only people who will be stabilized are the corporate farmers. Past history has taught them that the government is really not concerned with making sure that the smaller farm can be a viable, economic unit. I quote further from the article in the *Financial Post* as follows:

One result of the long-awaited adjustment program should be to speed up the exodus from the farm and to accelerate the process towards larger, more economically viable farms.

Again I would suggest that if it is the intention of the government to speed up the exodus from the small farms and accelerate the process toward larger, more economically viable farms, then the government should say so right now. It is not fair for agricultural producers in this country to be left in doubt as to what the government is really talking about. It seems to me it is only right and fair to let the individual farmer, the person who has made his life on a farm, know whether or not he is to be allowed to remain on his farm.

As we read some of the statements which have been made—I refer now to the statement made by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture—we see reference to the fact that the federation believes strongly that one program or policy cannot and should not attempt in itself to meet all the outstanding needs to which I have referred. The federal financial commitment in meeting the economic needs of farmers and the prairie economy involved in the stabilization plan is far too low in terms of present conditions and prospects. It appears to me the views of the federation should have been recognized by the minister. Perhaps he does not listen very often to the opinions expressed by the federation or to the views of outside sources generally, preferring advice from inside his department. The minister should be thinking about the