

Prairie Grain Stabilization Act

that is the question which gave the Chair, although it was not argued previously, a great deal of concern when considering the arguments. It was my opinion, and I must say I considered the matters raised by the hon. minister, that stabilization payments must be included in or somehow form a part of the cost of production. Therefore, it was my opinion at that time that I could not give the degree of weight to the argument which the minister has urged upon me today.

I might say that after hearing the helpful arguments from all hon. members, and after careful consideration of the *Hansard* record and the authorities cited, I am of the opinion that the amendment of the hon. member for Skeena does not go beyond the scope of the motion of the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar and does not substitute one method or principle for another. I think its purpose and effect is to clarify that which would be, I might say with respect to the motion of the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar, a bit difficult of interpretation if it stood by itself.

The minister argued that point today, and this is something that certainly occurred to the Chair. It is very difficult to understand exactly what the motion of the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar means or how it could be operative. It does seem to me that the addition of the amendment of the hon. member for Skeena is of assistance to the Chair in understanding what is before the House.

I am of the opinion, therefore, that the amendment under consideration is relevant to the motion of the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar; it makes it more intelligible and, therefore, is in order and should be put to the House. The hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) moves, seconded by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles):

That the amendment be amended by deleting all the words after "deduction" and substituting therefor the following "of the amount by which the costs of production for the crop year within which a levy under section 9 is deducted exceeds the costs of production for the crop year ending on July 31, 1970."

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, it was not my intention to enter the debate and I would not do so were it not for what the government did today. I suggest that the behaviour of the government with regard to the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act, and the behaviour of the government today, together constitute the most disgusting kind of contempts for a parliamentary and gentlemanly agreement possible. There has been a deliberate attempt on the part of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the minister in charge of the Wheat Board—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but if he was listening to my decision he will recall that I did say if the amendment to the motion were accepted we would at this stage be confining the debate very narrowly. I suggest to the hon. member with respect that he should not range beyond the motion and the amendment which are now before the House.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, you will have me resume my seat when you see fit. With great respect, however, what I am saying is relevant to the motion and the amendment before the House. I intend, without the slightest disrespect, to continue along the lines I began.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker.]

What we have attempted to do through these amendments is genuinely and sincerely change the bill from one which we think is bad to the kind of stabilization we think would be better. That is what we have attempted to do. This is what members in my party and the Conservative party have been trying to do. What the government has done has been not to attempt to meet the arguments we have put forward in respect of their stabilization plan, but deliberately confuse, on the floor of this chamber, on radio and on television, the western farmers into thinking that all that is involved is an amount of money under one act and an amount of money under another act. When the Prime Minister and the minister in charge of the Wheat Board do that, they are doing a dishonest disservice to the western farmers of this country. That is not the issue of either the motion, the amendment or the bill. The bill is an attempt to establish a stabilization plan, and you do not have to be a genius to understand it, in spite of the fact that the legalese of the bill makes it difficult to follow.

An hon. Member: Speak to the Chair.

Mr. Lewis: I will speak to the minister, Mr. Speaker, which does not give me as much pleasure as speaking to the amendment, but unfortunately that is what I have to do. I speak to the minister because he is the cause of the confusion and the distortion with which this Parliament and the western farmers are now faced. What the bill before us suggests is that we establish a measure to stabilize the ups and downs of grain farmers' income, by creating a fund into which the government will pay a certain amount and into which farmers will pay a certain amount, using that fund to equalize these ups and downs or booms and disasters to which the western and eastern grain farmers are subject.

What the motion before the House and the amendment of the hon. member for Skeena attempt to suggest is that the stabilization proposed by the government is stabilization of poverty. If you are going to have stabilization which is of value to the grain farmers, that stabilization must deal with the net income of the farmer, taking into account the rising costs of production. If you stabilize income on the basis of gross revenue only, you will be putting the farmer into a straitjacket of poverty because the gross revenue for the average is established on a moving five-year period, with the cost of production going up and net revenue contracting. The farmer, like every other professional, worker or businessman, does not live on his gross revenue, but on his net income after he has paid the costs of production.

• (4:00 p.m.)

We have therefore urged that the law be changed so that the stabilization is based on net income. This is the reason I say, with respect to you, Mr. Speaker, that what I started to say is entirely in order. This is what the three prairie ministers of agriculture proposed to the minister in charge of the Wheat Board last Friday. One of the things they urged on him was precisely the line which is proposed in the motion of the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar and the amendment by the hon. member for Skeena to the effect that the stabilization be based on net income. It is not the amounts of money that are involved in this. What we want to make clear so far as the members