

Agricultural Policies

the minister has in mind. From time to time some new legislative programs are introduced. These appear out of a blue sky. The Lift program was thrown at the farmers without first consulting them. Only two weeks ago the Premier of Saskatchewan, who does not lean to the side of the official opposition, stated on a television program that he had not been able to find five farmers in Saskatchewan in favour of the program. Why should members of the official opposition be criticized for condemning the government for their piecemeal, ill-conceived and ill-thought out agricultural program when a Liberal provincial Premier is so critical?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Southam: To add insult to injury, this afternoon the hon. member for Regina East (Mr. Burton) referred to a telegram he had received in connection with Operation Lift. I have received two such telegrams. I wish to refer to one received from Mr. W. G. Gilbey of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Employees Association. This telegram points out the serious problem of the elevator agents in western Canada, who are trying to fulfil their duties as agents and assisting the government as best they can by moving all the grain they can before the end of the crop year, having to stop work to assist farmers to decipher the Lift program. In spite of the thousands of dollars that have been spent, and the hundreds of thousands of pieces of literature available with respect to this program, the farmers still do not understand the government's intentions or the rules and regulations. The elevator agents spend half their time trying to explain, and in some cases to excuse the government for its ineptitude.

• (4:00 p.m.)

Nevertheless, here is a bona fide complaint involving a thousand or so elevator agents. I suggest, as did the hon. member for Regina East this morning, that the government should take note of the situation and amend the regulations so as to compensate these people for the time required to administer this ill-conceived program.

Much has been said about the two bills before the House at the present time, C-196 and C-197. I support what my hon. friend from Crowfoot said this afternoon in criticism of the proceedings in committee this morning. I have the honour to be a member of that committee. We were dealing with amendments to Bill C-196 and we on this side were

[Mr. Southam.]

hoping to advance an important amendment which would have clarified an important point in the bill. Before there had even been a chance to debate the motion put forward by the hon. member for Crowfoot, a member on the government side moved that the question be put.

This is the answer to the Minister without Portfolio (Mr. Lang) when he talks about a democratic approach. To my mind, what took place this morning was one of the most undemocratic procedures I have ever witnessed—an attempt to steamroller an opposition which was only trying to do its duty. Perhaps that bill is not as controversial as Bill C-197, but if it is the intention of the government to follow a similar course with regard to that legislation I am sorry for the poor farmers because the legislation will fall far short of what the industry expects from the House of Commons or of what members of the opposition would like to see.

There are several things seriously wrong with Bill C-197. Some commitment must be forthcoming from the government with regard to certain of its principles. Producer participation must be provided for. If a commitment to this effect could be obtained from a spokesman for the government, we would be content. In the last debate which took place on the subject of agriculture a speech was made by the hon. member for Fraser Valley East (Mr. Pringle), a government supporter, a member of the Standing Committee and a man very knowledgeable in the field of controlled production. He was seriously concerned about Bill C-197 and made critical comments to this effect in an article which appeared in the April issue of the *Canadian Poultryman*. I feel he was justified in making these comments.

The hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Douglas) also expressed critical views about this legislation and advocated some changes in basic principles. There was a measure of altercation in the House the other night on the subject—some cross-fire during the debate—and once again the hon. member for Fraser Valley East was involved. The issue arose because the hon. member had accused the opposition of filibustering and had sent out some literature to this effect, literature which would mislead the average farmer because it suggested that basic principles were capable of being amended in committee. It is my understanding of the rules that this cannot be done; that the principles have to be agreed on by the House before a bill goes to