

would not receive pay-outs from the stabilization fund. That is unfair. Likewise the average income for a particular year might be lower than the average for the previous five years across the board, but you might still have farmers who are getting grades 1 and 2, with others getting inferior grades, yet they would all receive the same pay-out. That is very unfair to the farmers who have inferior grades of wheat or other grains.

This is the type of amendment I think we can all agree on, and this is the type of amendment that will make a better and more equitable bill for farmers all across the prairie grain region.

There are a number of other things in the bill I feel are unfair. I referred earlier to the fact that this measure should be universal in participation. If it were universal I believe it would be stronger and much better.

Under the bill there is to be a levy imposed on the producer of 2 per cent on all grain sold up to a maximum of \$25,000, which means a maximum levy of \$500 per year. The government will contribute 4 per cent. If there is a deficit, then as I read the legislation the levy on producers will increase from 2 per cent to 2.5 per cent, and the contribution by the government will increase from 4 per cent to 4.5 per cent, and so on. If there is a deficit in the fund for more than three years the pay-outs to the producers will not remain level or static but will decrease, and that too strikes me as something that is really unfair. When the need is greatest for the farmers on the prairies, if there has been a general pay-out for three or four years, the benefits will decrease because there is less money in the fund.

There should be an amendment so that the government will contribute more if there is a serious situation on the prairies for a number of years when income is down, otherwise this measure will not be as effective as it should be, and it will not be much of a stabilizing fund.

I note also a clause that says that if the fund is in a deficit position for three years or more the income of farmers will not be stabilized at 100 per cent of the average for the previous five years, but rather at 90 per cent. Again this is a downward trend in stabilization of farm income if we are unfortunate enough to have several consecutive years in which farm income is dropping instead of going up. That is another amendment I think we should consider when this bill reaches the committee stage.

I note also that all types of grain will qualify in respect of the farm income stabilization fund. That strikes me as rather strange when we know that the government has put so much grain on the open market. We have many people who advocate a free enterprise system in the farm community, and who say that marketing boards are not good and that the power of the Wheat Board is too strong. If these people feel that way and believe in the open market, why should they be allowed to qualify for stabilization? If they believe in free marketing, and the floor drops out from under the price of barley, rapeseed, wheat, flax, oats or any grain, then why should they be covered by this plan? Surely this plan goes against the principles those people advocate when they talk about a free market. I do not believe we should be covering the grain that is

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sold on the open market. We should not be supporting off-board grain sales under the grain stabilization bill.

Most of us will agree that grain which is sold by one farmer to another, or to a feed mill or a feed lot, should be covered. We can move an amendment so that this type of transaction is covered. This represents a small transaction made between the farmer and someone else, probably in his own community.

However, when it comes to selling grain off the board on the open market, then I suggest those grains should not be covered. If these people want to play the free enterprise game with Richardson and Sons or the grain exchange, then let them play that game, but why should we have a government that comes forward with an insurance plan that will subsidize those people if the floor drops out of the market? This, to me, is another form of subsidization of those involved in grain exchange and private grain trade. We do not need that in this House. If I am to be consistent, that is one part of the bill I cannot support. That is a typical, Liberal free enterprise tactic, where there is free enterprise for the rich, but, boy oh boy, when those free enterprisers get into trouble, there has to be a little socialism to bail them out. Surely to God if they believe in their philosophy, they could follow it through. And why should it be followed up with public funds?

● (2010)

I think there should be marketing boards for all farm commodities and guaranteed prices when there is planned production where the objective is the maximization of food production. We should not be fooling around with food in the open market. We should not be gambling with flax, rye and rape seed on the open market as if gambling with dice in a casino. There is no need for that in Canadian agricultural policy.

Deep down in that big, warm, congenial heart I have a hunch that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) agrees with me, but he is probably having a hell of a fight in cabinet with the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lang) who is responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board. I think the time has come when we should move on the recommendation made, I believe, by the Department of Agriculture to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), namely, that the Wheat Board come under the authority of the Minister of Agriculture. It makes more sense to me to have all farm jurisdictions, departments and agencies under the Minister of Agriculture. What does wheat have to do with the Minister of Justice? I believe that this is a political move.

I do not think politics should be played in regard to the livelihood of farmers, their futures, destinies and incomes. I think the Minister of Agriculture was right when he suggested to the Prime Minister that he should have the Wheat Board under his authority. That makes more sense, and I think hon. members in this House would give the minister support in that regard. We sometimes sympathize with the minister in his fight with the academic from Saskatoon-Humboldt, and I think we can give him support there as well.

There are several other areas of this bill which should be amended. I notice that when the expenses of a farmer are calculated under this legislation, a number of important areas are excluded. It excludes, for example, depreciation