

Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act

really mean is to grease the skids of the adjustment process.

Let me take this opportunity to say to the government that it is much easier to get people out of agriculture than it is to get them back in it. The trend in practically all industrialized societies such as our own is for the population to move from rural areas to the cities. It is very rare—at least, I do not know of any such example—that there is a trend to move from the city back into farming. People go from the city to the country in order to indulge in a hobby, or something like that, but not for the purpose of operating a farm. So I take this opportunity to say that the government should get a few practical people to sit among their advisers before they go completely overboard on this course which they obviously have set for themselves.

It is much easier to destroy the structure of a rural society than it is at some later point in time to rebuild it into a structure which the planners think is desirable. It is much more difficult, for example, to plan a totally rural society than it is to plan an urban society, because in one case we are dealing with the forces of nature which are not under our control. In the city we have much greater control over the forces of nature and therefore much more control over any plan thought to be desirable. This is not always, in fact very rarely, true of the farming community. So, Mr. Speaker, having said this I shall close by urging the minister to give consideration to reviewing the position taken with regard to interest being paid on cash advances in the circumstances described in Clause 6.

Mr. Gordon Ritchie (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, in general I must support Bill C-239 as being necessary at the present time for our agricultural community in the west, although I deplore it in the sense that it is too bad we have to have it. This means that the products of the farm do not move fast enough and in large enough volume to provide the income necessary to maintain a viable farm economy without the assistance of legislation such as this. This type of legislation has been around for some time. I have been a member only since 1968 and therefore am not too familiar with the previous regulations. However, the advent of the new quota system or new regulations has no doubt meant that there must be considerable change in this piece of legislation. In general I would have to support it.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the grain farmers of western Canada are entering the most regulated period they have ever experienced or since the advent of farming in western Canada. The other day I spoke to a farmer 77 years of age who is still active. He has been farming since the First World War. He told me he had never seen such a regulated period when there was so much uncertainty concerning what a farmer should do and what he should sow in the coming year.

Although the aim of the regulations is to assist farmers, presumably, in planning logically, I should like to inform the minister that my experience is that this spring the farmers are more at sea than ever before. When I ask them what they are going to plant this year,

[Mr. Gleave.]

how they feel the regulations will affect them and how the quotas will affect them, the answer I receive is, "I don't know". Then I ask what they are going to plant and they say they intend to plant a little of everything no matter whether they should or not, because they will have it on hand and hope they can sell it in order to get by and remain alive on the farm.

• (4:40 p.m.)

The advent of these regulations is very important. Just the other day the minister brought forward an amendment to the Wheat Board Act which will give the board jurisdiction over the sale of flaxseed, rye and rapeseed. Rapeseed in particular has been a very important commodity in the last few years and certainly in my area it has spelled the difference between an almost disastrous year and one which has been reasonable for many farmers.

The unfortunate announcement of the minister was made apparently without discussion with the rapeseed producers, the provincial Rapeseed Association of Canada and the crushers in western Canada. This would allow the government to take over rapeseed and put it under the Wheat Board. I believe the minister has stated publicly that the government does not intend at this time to bring rapeseed under the Wheat Board. Regardless of this, everyone knows—even those members of the public who are unfamiliar with the government—that this legislation enables the government to put rapeseed under the Wheat Board without referring the matter to Parliament, and indicates the government's intention.

What has been the effect of this announcement on the industry? So far, the cancellation of open contracts has been considerable. On May 3, 101 contracts were cancelled, representing 5,000 bushels, and on April 30 there were 418 fewer contracts. This means that there has been a sharp drop in open contracts for rapeseed on the Winnipeg Grain Exchange, with a consequent drop in sales and pricing.

Notwithstanding the fact that the minister gave the assurance that there was no intention at this time to bring oilseed under the Wheat Board, his announcement has had a bad effect at a time when we are most anxious that rapeseed production be expanded. I think everyone is hopeful that it will be expanded but we must remember that the market in rapeseed is very competitive. We are competing against soybeans and safflower oil throughout the world.

I hope the minister can give a firm assurance to the trade and to our exporters that the placing of rapeseed under the Wheat Board will not be detrimental to our trade and will not impede in any way either the selling or the buying of rapeseed on world markets. Some people believe that the Japanese exporters and crushers have been in favour of having rapeseed under the Wheat Board. Others have stated that it is not so. It would be most interesting to know just what the facts are.

There is another item in the bill which I think is important, that is, the provision regarding the phasing out of the levy for PFAA. I am sure that over the years