

The question is whether this government will. I guess the issue is: exactly what type of stability is being sought under this bill and for whom? One thing that concerns me, and I know it concerns a lot of my colleagues and other people across the country, is that under these principles there are some missing; primarily one that sets out and commits the government to maintain viable farm families. If we are going to maintain a viable world community in this country in areas where agriculture is the economic base, we have to maintain farm families.

This bill says nothing about that. To me, that is a major omission and a major problem. Although you could fit in a good social democratic program, as New Democrats we are very concerned with the future of farm families, we are very concerned with the future of rural communities, in putting in a program. You can also put in a program which that does not recognize or deal with the future of farm families. I say that because the record of this government has been the dismantling of farming families and in fact the dismantling of rural Canada. We have had a number of examples over the last few years. To outline some of them, we have certainly had changes in advance payments which have not kept in mind farming families and average size farms. That is not the principle behind the change to advance payments. The Canadian Wheat Board is being dismantled and certainly in the removal of oats there was absolutely no meaningful consultation in that change. Many producers want canola but the government has and continues to refuse to allow farmers and wheat board permit book holders to make a decision on their own wheat board.

I see red flags when we have a bill that on the one hand sets out some nice principles but on the other hand, when you compare it to the actions of this government, makes you wonder if in fact this government is really committed to the principle. Why does it not act with respect to the Canadian Wheat Board and allow producers to make their own decisions on the future of the Canadian Wheat Board?

The free trade act has also wreaked havoc with the Canadian Wheat Board and with the grain trade in this country. This spring it is expected that American grain will be allowed to come freely across the border. That is going to cause further problems and will drive down the price. The Canadian Wheat Board has already said it is going to make sure it is very competitive with American

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grain which simply means the Canadian farmer is going to be receiving less for his or her grain.

Two-price wheat is gone. The whole future rationalization of the transportation system in this country has not been proceeded with keeping rural families in mind. When those types of actions are taken without keeping in mind these fundamental principles, who is to say what sort of program we are going to have under this particular bill?

In my opinion, it would much improve this legislation and much improve the confidence of Canadians in this government if there were some commitment to developing a program or programs that in fact have the objective of maintaining viable rural communities. That applies not only to this legislation but certainly to the rural Canada that depends on forestry, on fisheries, et cetera.

There are no details with respect to the actual programs but there are some concerns. We are hearing all kinds of rumours on GRIP and NISA and certainly the Saskatchewan government has been going all over the province, in fact claiming that it is its own program basically. There are some concerns about the GRIP; that it is not based on the cost of production, that there is no cap in the actual legislation. There is on the program. We have not seen those details. We do not know exactly what is going to be coming out when the program is announced. Certainly the words and comments we are hearing do not bode well for viable rural communities in the future.

The bill needs some fundamental change with respect to the principles that it sets out.

I think it is also important to state that while this bill deals with incomes, there is another aspect that goes hand in hand with incomes that this government has yet to talk about and that is farm financing. The rural communities and farmers in those areas have been trying to survive but they have been suffering because they have not got a steady, reliable income, and the financing aspect has really hurt them, along with input costs going up.

While it is very important to have a stable income program, and it is yet to be seen in fact if we will have one, it is just as important to have a strong finance program as well. We have seen time and time again, in Saskatchewan and right across the country, foreclosures are up, quit claims are up, people are having a very