

Prairie Grain Stabilization Act

In the years 1963-67 it averaged \$435 million. If "income in kind" is deducted from these figures the change was from \$368 million to \$131 million.

Those are some of the factors the opposition must consider. Surely the minister has some responsibility in this area. Instead of trying to force a bill of this magnitude through the House and threatening us with withholding payment to farmers unless it is passed quickly, why did the minister not suggest an interim payment for farmers and for grain growers whose needs are dire and pressing? If there had been an interim payment we would have had time to thrash out this bill in committee and in the House and bring down good, sound legislation.

This program will not operate for just one year; the stabilization plan will operate for a long time and we ought to arrive at good, sound legislation. If the minister had been a smarter politician he would have put a little money into the pockets of farmers and Ross Thatcher could have called the election that he is holding up for want of cheques. Perhaps the Liberal party could have found a candidate in Assiniboia for the by-election if the government had put money into the pockets of the farmers of western Canada. As it is, Mr. Thatcher is trying to hold off an election. He wants to know what the federal government will pay to the farmer. Mr. Thatcher knows that unless the western farmer has money in his pocket he will be in trouble.

Only yesterday I met a boy from Weyburn. He came up from the riding of the late Ab Douglas. This lad said to me, "Mr. Cadieu, who is representing Mr. Douglas's riding? I know Mr. Douglas is no longer here." I said, "I don't know. The government has only Mr. Lang representing a constituency out here, and he is pretty busy right now. Somehow, I don't think he will be back here after the next election."

An hon. Member: That's wishful thinking.

Mr. Cadieu: I said to the lad, "Possibly I can help you." I took him around and tried to get him the information he was looking for.

I could talk a great deal about this important legislation. Many farm organizations have presented good briefs on the subject. Surely the minister could have utilized the research staff in his office and come forward with a suggestion under which we could get an interim payment into the farmers' pockets. Farmers out west badly need this money. The minister should have done that, instead of fiddle-daddling in this manner. Instead of bringing before this House legislation that he knew would not be acceptable to members of the official opposition or of other opposition parties, he should have done as I have suggested. I think it is high time we quit this fiddle-daddling around.

Let us stop playing hide-and-go-seek with the farmers of western Canada and people in all walks of life. I am sick of seeing this kind of monkey business going on, because the minister seems to be saying, "Either you pass this legislation right away or the farmers of western Canada will not get the money. You are holding up the money which is to be paid to these farmers." It is high

[Mr. Cadieu.]

time we got away from that approach and got down to business.

Mr. Lang: Hear, hear!

Mr. Cadieu: It is no use suggesting that only in the last month or two farmers have been placed in a straitjacket; they have been in it ever since this government took office.

Mr. D. R. Gundlock (Lethbridge): Mr. Speaker, may I begin by quoting what somebody has said about the government's prairie grains policy:

—until there is a more definite understanding by producers of the program proposed by the government or until it is implemented and its effectiveness can be assessed, it appears prairie grain producers will continue to express apprehension and concern about these policy changes which ultimately will not only affect the grains industry but everyone in Canada.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, I express very strongly the need for price protection for the producer through the initial payment system. On page 8 of the brief of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture we find the following passage:

We recognize that the present bill does provide in effect that shortfalls in initial payments are paid by the federal government. We think that maintenance on an adequate level of prices is in principle a direct responsibility of the federal government because of the helplessness of the prairie farmer in the face of severe and subsidized international competition. We are however inclined not to quarrel with the cost-sharing feature of the proposal. Our point is that initial payments should be used as an income supporting mechanism.

• (3:10 p.m.)

This afternoon we heard about the \$100 million. We heard about it a year ago, Mr. Speaker. What was put in the hands of the prairie grain producers? It wasn't \$100 million. May I ask the minister what the exact figure was?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member can ask the minister a question, but if the minister replies he will have the floor and—

Mr. Gundlock: I don't think—

Mr. Speaker: Would the hon. member resume his seat? He wishes to ask the minister a question. If he does, then I say that if the minister speaks now he will close the debate.

Mr. Gundlock: Mr. Speaker, we considered a sum of \$100 million last year. I want to ask how much found its way to the prairie producers.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member knows the rules of the House. The hon. member now has the floor. If he asks a question and the minister answers, the minister will close the debate. The hon. member should make his speech, and presumably when the minister replies he will answer the hon. member's question.

Mr. Gundlock: I appreciate your ruling, Mr. Speaker, and I fully realize I should not be doing this—but as a matter of fact I rather enjoy it. When the minister is