

Prairie Grain Stabilization Act

minister will take my representations in the manner in which they are intended and will give some consideration to seeing the prairie agriculture ministers before he proceeds any further with this bill.

On this side of the House we are perfectly willing to allow passage of the acreage payments and, therefore if the minister sees fit, to split the bill. We will not allow it to go through in its entirety when we know it contains such serious defects.

Mr. Lang: I wonder if the hon. member would permit a question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Is the hon. Minister rising for the purpose of asking a question?

Mr. Lang: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): This can only be done if the hon. member who has the floor accepts the question. The Chair would ask the hon. member if he is ready to accept a question from the hon. Minister.

Mr. Rowland: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I shall try to answer it.

Mr. Lang: Of course, as I said earlier, I shall be glad to meet with the prairie ministers of agriculture, but I am not sure I have received any word from them yet about that. I wanted to ask the hon. member, when he suggests that his party would be agreeable to giving unanimous consent to splitting the bill, does that cover an agreement to split the bill so that clauses 32 and 33 might be passed immediately and more time taken over the balance of the bill?

Mr. Rowland: Mr. Speaker, the offer which my party has made repeatedly referred only to transitional payments. It would not apply to clause 33.

Mr. Gerald Richard Cobbe (Portage): Mr. Speaker, it is not difficult for one to understand the confusion that the people in the agricultural industry face these days in view of the number of agricultural bills and regulations that have been introduced in a short time. I refer to such items as the farm products marketing agencies bill; prairie grain stabilization bill; grassland incentive program; Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act amendments; Canada Grain Act and many others. Then, we get into the old numbers game—176, 177 and 244. It is very confusing to those in the industry who are trying to sort out the total programs, and it is even more difficult when we have some people who have done an outstanding job of mixing up those programs in the minds of producers. At times members have been forced to vote against legislation which they know is good. I do not like to see people playing politics with the livelihood of others. I do not think anybody would disagree that many changes are needed in the agricultural industry. If this industry is to keep up with the changes made in other parts of the world and other segments of our society, the changes we make must be practical.

Many suggestions have been made lately about what should be done with the money involved in this bill. It has been suggested that a payout of \$100 million should take place immediately. Basically, this would mean separating the payment provision from the stabilization plan and a

[Mr. Rowland.]

percentage of the \$100 million going to the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act.

Mr. Benjamin: Oh, no; oh no! It is different money.

Mr. Cobbe: This payment would have to be credited to wheat farmers and to wheat farmers alone. I can see that the producers of oats and barley would get very little. Once again, the producers who in the past made an effort to overcome the problems of surplus in some areas of agriculture, either voluntarily or through the Operation Lift program, get the short end of the stick. We have introduced many programs. Many bills have come before the House dealing with the production of wheat. In many cases it has been evident that little consideration has been given to other grain producers. The cash advance payments bill, for instance, really was not an equitable arrangement for those who were not growing wheat.

• (4:10 p.m.)

It has been suggested that if the stabilization bill were to pass, the government would no longer be overly concerned about the agricultural industry because it could be argued that the stabilization bill would be looking after the problems of the grain farmer. This is a ridiculous statement. I cannot imagine any government scrapping all the programs which presently deal with the agricultural industry. No bill is perfect in the opinion of all. Changes need to be made to bills at various times. If the controls and regulations do not do the job that they should do, they should be changed. I am a firm believer in that.

Months have been spent on this program, Mr. Speaker, and many, many people and organizations have been consulted. I agree that the farmers should ask for all they can get. Nobody disagrees with that. It was even suggested that the "Big 3" from western Canada should be heard. Some of their representatives have already been heard. Those people appeared before our committee, along with many other people. I am sure that they feel more money would improve this bill. Who does not feel that way about most things? More money would do wonders for many bills which have been presented and enacted into law. I am confident that more money will be put into this program as time goes on. It is very evident that the agricultural industry will require more assistance, if one considers world conditions. Speaking of more money, Mr. Speaker, reminds me of some Members of Parliament who spoke behind the curtains and in hallways in favour of an increase in their salaries and then, when the time came to vote, voted against that increase. The provision of more money will help almost anything, if you do not have to suffer the consequences.

I hope that following passage of this bill the government will undertake a continuing review of it and, hopefully, make changes to it, because this bill spells out a totally new concept for the agricultural industry. It is a new program introduced in an effort to stabilize income. The Standing Committee considered the problems of the agricultural industry and the need for stabilizing income.

It has been suggested that if farmers had not grown crops other than cereal crops in the past, many of them would be even worse off than they now are. Some hon. members feel that after this bill is passed we shall not hear any more about the stabilization program. They feel