

Prairie Grain Stabilization Act

the kind asked because the whole basis for discussion had been destroyed. Then, the question was asked whether or not we were prepared to proceed with the bill, and to that my answer was categorical, that it was for the government to decide. The government has the carriage of business in the House and brings measures forward when it desires to do so. I believe the minister and I are not too far apart, but I thought I should make plain at the first opportunity that this was the discussion which took place.

In my opinion, I bear no responsibility for this bill being here today. It is for the government House leader and the government to decide what they want this House to discuss.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order. The Chair has given an opportunity to the hon. member for Peace River and the minister to clarify a point for the House. Insofar as it is possible to be lenient, the Chair has done so because this is a very important question. However, I believe it should be left at this point now that both hon. members have had an opportunity to express their views on the matter.

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the amendment to the motion which is before us deals with the question of the net cost element being introduced into a stabilization bill. There have been quite a number of statements about the problem of the grain farmers' income position as requiring some special modifications under the stabilization bill, notwithstanding the fact that we on our side made clear at all times that the stabilization bill was indeed a partial increase in the amount of support the government was giving to the grain industry, immediately and prospectively, but that the over-all question of support by the Canadian people as a whole to the grain farmer was a question which would continue to require examination. I made this quite clear in statements I made on March 15. I stated that, for the moment, this bill was adding \$40 million or so for this year and increasing the commitment for future years compared to the commitment under the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act and its declining amount of payment estimated on the basis of keeping the elevator system and transportation system operating efficiently. I said this was what we were doing and that the stabilization plan as a whole was particularly important in that it gave massive protection to farmers against drastic declines in gross sales in world markets over which no one has control because control is dependent upon climate and growing conditions throughout the world.

The hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) in this connection referred to an amount of \$60 million or \$70 million or so on a comparable basis which would in fact have been paid under the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act. The question I had wanted to put to him in that connection was whether he would mind referring to the amount of money which would have been paid in those years if the stabilization plan had been in effect in its present form without the amendment in relation to net proceeds or net deduction of costs which is before us. If he had answered that question, he would have had to say that somewhere between \$200 million and \$300 million might have been paid in each of the years 1968-69 and 1969-70 compared to the \$60 million or \$70 million which in fact

was paid under the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act in those years.

For the future, one can afford to look at the government's commitment of expenditure in an absolute way and estimate it. This does, of course, involve some speculation about sales, except that those of us who are optimistic believe the amount will in fact rise.

Mr. Horner: Would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, I think I will let the hon. member wait until I finish.

Mr. Horner: Thank you.

Mr. Lang: The question of the future, and the commitment of say \$35 million estimated for this year or next year of course, depends upon some speculation concerning the level of sales. However, it is a fairly realistic, if modest, estimate of the amount which may be spent based on the 4 per cent contribution by the federal government. The Temporary Wheat Reserves Act provisions are likely to result in a declining amount to something like \$30 million in the current year and perhaps down to \$20 million or so in the following year. If one looks at the amount to be paid to farmers in those years it becomes more speculative but it is unlimited. The amount paid to the farmers may well exceed the amount being paid out of the treasury because of the commitment in the bill to lend, in an unlimited way, interest-free to the fund, whatever is required to keep the farmers' income or gross sales level at the previous five year average.

The amendment comes to the House in an interesting fashion. It really demonstrates not the objective on the part of the opposition to improve the plan, but simply part of the tactics we have seen in adjournment motions and other motions to delay Bill C-244 being voted on in the House. The reason it does this is clear. I should like to remind hon. members that the principal motion which is here being amended was brought before the House for debate on June 22. After a couple of speeches from the opposition side praising it, I made a very short interjection in which I indicated that in my view it was in its form unworkable and, I might have added—and I did refer to the committee proceedings—that there had been other suggestions about that kind of amendment and that it would, in fact, be impossible to give any meaning to it. Notwithstanding that advice, hon. members opposite lauded the motion proposed to the House.

Yet when the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) introduced his amendment, he said he felt that without this further clarification the motion would have left wide open just what was meant by increased cost of production. His statement is recorded in *Hansard* at page 8089. In the course of the debate on this amendment the hon. member for Skeena later on, as recorded at page 8148 of *Hansard*, referred to that amendment as being one which was necessary in order to make the motion intelligible. Further comments were made by the hon. member for Crowfoot as recorded at page 8150 of *Hansard*, to the effect that the motion produced by the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggan (Mr. Gleave) may be very difficult to implement.