

Government Orders

that the American federal government is proposing to withdraw support of all crop insurance programs. Canada is moving in another direction on that, we are moving to improve crop insurance.

His proposal certainly has merit and I sympathize with it. The difficulty with his motion is that it encroaches on provincial jurisdiction. It goes beyond evaluating the federal act and indeed encroaches into an area of provincial jurisdiction. Such an advisory committee, which would have as its mandate the responsibility of monitoring the efficiency, effectiveness and the administration of provincial legislation, would certainly require the consent of the respective provincial government.

Having regard, however, to the merit that is enshrined within the thrust of the hon. member's motion, I think it would be good use of such a federal-provincial producer advisory committee for fostering a better exchange of ideas, for communication, for sharing information and for looking at the administration and management of the program.

While we cannot, as a federal government, encroach into that provincial jurisdiction, I would be prepared and undertake, as a condition of the agreements, to negotiate with the provinces the establishment of such a committee which could serve the purpose which the hon. member has outlined. In only that way can we avoid the consequence of encroaching into provincial jurisdiction at this particular time. The mandate that the member is proposing would clearly involve provincial legislation as well as federal legislation.

I would be prepared to give the House that undertaking and therefore accept the spirit and thrust of it. However, I do not think we can incorporate it into the legislation itself.

Mr. Foster: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister's comments and sentiments. What he is proposing is exactly what I had in mind when I moved this motion. Essentially it gives the minister legal authority to establish an advisory committee on crop insurance, especially the federal government expenditures in that regard. I have envisaged that he would only establish this advisory committee if and when he had negotiated this arrangement with all the provincial governments. It does not require him to establish this advisory committee, only that he would have the legal authority to establish it

after he had negotiated those agreements which provided for that. So if there was one province that did not have crop insurance or did not want to participate, it was not incorporated in its agreement, then of course there would not be a representative from that province in the advisory group.

So just to clarify, I certainly did not want to infringe on provincial legislation. It is simply permissive legislation that would allow the minister to establish this advisory group if and when he negotiated such an arrangement as a combined arrangement from all those 10 provincial crop insurance agreements. I hope that under those circumstances the minister would be able to see his way clear to agree to the amendment.

Hon. Ralph Ferguson (Lambton—Middlesex): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to hear the minister say that he accepts the spirit of the amendment. I would just like to reiterate what my colleague from Algoma stated, that this is permissive legislation. It says the minister may do this.

We have had somewhat peculiar circumstances in the past years where, under certain circumstances, crop insurance was not able to cover isolated examples of very significant crop losses. I refer here to a few years ago in the northeast section of Saskatchewan, for example, where they were flooded out. The farmers were not able to plant their crops, and because they were not able to plant their crops they did not qualify for crop insurance. So I think that we have to take a look at that in detail. Also in that same year, at the other end of the province, we had a drought and those farmers did qualify for the insurance program.

I would also like to point out that in my own constituency we had a unique situation in Lambton County a few years ago. We had severe rains during the fall of the year and a bad storm along with it. The lake backed up into the Thedford Marsh. On the other hand, they had to open the dam at Parkhill and a lot of the potato growers were literally wiped out. We have one of them in the gallery with us today from the Wiltse family. He is up here listening to this debate.

They know what it is like when they do not have access to crop insurance through some quirk of the legislation or quirk of nature. I suggest that if we have the advisory committee available to us to co-ordinate the input from the provinces and their various crop insurance commis-