

recently went belly up. The Industrial Development Bank took back this large unit of land. Here was an opportunity for the government to purchase this large unit of land through PFRA funds and turn it into community pasture land. Had this been done, the pressure would have been taken off community pasture lands in south central and southeastern Saskatchewan. Such action would provide a considerable degree of assistance. This is not a big thing in the sense of national over-all policy, but it is fundamental if we want to be sure young people undertaking the raising of cattle will have some hope of success.

I know of another rancher of long standing in another area who is prepared to sell out a very large unit of land. This land could be purchased with PFRA funds and used for community pasture. The provincial government has made some progress in this direction. However, a great deal more progress could be made if the provincial and federal governments co-operated in this regard as well as in the establishment of a national, farm disaster plan initially using the emergency funds of PFAA.

● (1630)

I take pleasure in the fact that the bill will bring down the cost of crop insurance to the farmers. I am pleased to see the increase in the funding of the grasslands incentives program which is a voluntary program. I am glad to see also the increase in funding to permit larger dug-outs under PFRA and the increase in funding to allow for the establishment of more community pastures wherever they can be established. These provisions will contribute in a substantial manner to the development of a diversified, well-planned farm operation in western Canada. A producer of beef who wishes to expand his herd, and is told by government to diversify, will know that the government at least is moving in the direction of auxiliary programs to ensure that he can diversify. He will have an opportunity to obtain pasture land, and should there be a disaster in southern Saskatchewan or southeast Alberta, he will know that there is a national farm disaster plan with large contingency funds to meet that disaster. This knowledge should be especially comforting this year in view of the danger of a very severe drought as well as a severe outbreak of grasshoppers.

In conclusion, I say that westerners are always optimistic. We have had to be like Newfoundlanders in that we have had to depend on the weather so much that we have learned to be very optimistic and to live with the weather. We are still optimistic that, in fact, this year we will not face a disaster in the form of a drought. The minister's speeches are piled up in my office and I have been diligently reading them in search of some action which I have not found. After diligently reading them, I hope to see the piles of paper turned into an over-all comprehensive program which will protect the producers in this country should they face a real disaster in the form of drought and grasshoppers.

**Mr. Jack Murta (Lisgar):** Mr. Speaker, in rising to take part in what I believe to be the conclusion of the debate on crop insurance legislation, I should like to say to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) that I regret that the government has seen fit to use in crop insurance legislation as what is commonly called in this House

### *Crop Insurance Act*

"filler" legislation. It seems to me this piece of legislation is too important to be treated in this manner. It is also unfortunate that when the legislation was introduced some weeks ago the government did not see fit to continue the debate of the following day, so that the bill could have been dealt with in the House of Commons and moved on to the Agriculture Committee. I know from talking to some ministers of agriculture across the country that this legislation is being awaited at the present time. A good many programs and possibilities hinge upon what the provinces will be doing this coming spring. Also I believe the farmers are looking forward to this legislation as possibly being a little better vehicle than we had before in Canada for at least a form of crop insurance.

The way in which this piece of agricultural legislation has been brought in I think is, to some extent, typical of the attitude the government has had toward agriculture. We have a Minister of Agriculture who has done a good deal of speaking across the country of late. Like the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Knight), I have read his speeches but I have not been able to find much in them. He seems to have been patting farmers on the head and saying that everything is all right, that he would stick up for them. However, that really is as far as he has gone. It seems the government has the attitude that while prices are high, as a result of the supply and demand situation, this is the time to sit back and not really look to see whether any improvements can be made in the field of agriculture. I think this is too bad. I certainly hope the Minister of Agriculture realizes this. After reading his speeches, I have yet to find that he has given any direction to farmers' programs or agricultural policy.

The farmers of Canada are asking questions. They are asking questions individually and also within their farm organizations. They are continuing something this year which started last year and which I believe is very good. They are starting to challenge some of the systems we have had over the past few years. This really is the time to challenge these systems. I refer to the marketing system, the transportation system, the feed grain system and the system of marketing within a world or global context. If the inquiring and searching were done in times of low prices, there could be a tendency to look at it as a panic situation or a very emotional situation. If this were to happen it could cloud our whole thinking. The only thing the minister has come up with has been that this year he wants the farmers to grow all the grain possible. I think he used the statement "to beat the band". There has been no clear, definite direction, except by the minister responsible for the Wheat Board, as to what the government would like.

Statistics Canada published an indication of what the farmers intended to plant this year. It revealed that the farmers do not have the kind of confidence we would all like to see. I think the attitude taken by the Minister of Agriculture towards Canadian farmers is not good enough. The minister seems to be woefully lacking in his duty to the Canadian farmer. I say in all sincerity that he must give an indication of the direction in which the government is going. He must start raising questions of a challenging nature with the people engaged in agriculture concerning what should be done. It is my thinking, and I certainly think the thinking of the Conservative party,