

Prairie Farm Assistance Act

of Saskatchewan. It has not been an act of which the farmers in that province have been able to take advantage in any large proportion. If there should be a widespread crop failure, it would put most of the burden on the provincial treasury of that province. The same situation would apply in Alberta and also in Manitoba. We therefore need to consider not only improvements in prairie farm assistance. We feel it is time that another step forward should be made. We feel that it is time also to consider the companion legislation, namely the Crop Insurance Act, in order to make these two vital amendments if the Crop Insurance Act is to apply to any more than just a handful of grain producers in this country.

This resolution asks the house to consider these specific things to which I have referred. It also suggests that other appropriate amendments may be required in order to assure adequate income support in time of crop failure.

Under the Prairie Farm Assistance Act there is provision for certain types of acreage payments defined under the act. We have heard a lot about acreage payments. We have heard a lot about the \$1 an acre payment with a maximum of \$200. We heard a lot about it in the election campaign from the Conservatives. We have heard nothing about it since the election. They have been completely silent on their policy with regard to acreage payments. The Prime Minister went back and forth across the country, and in one public meeting after another he said, "Acreage payments have become part and parcel of the policy of the government". According to the Canadian Press, the Prime Minister indicated on May 31 that "special acreage payments will be put on a regular annual basis". This statement was repeated at public meeting after public meeting.

Mr. Jones: You opposed acreage payments.

Mr. Argue: We voted for them.

Mr. Jones: You said they were the worst possible type of payment that could be made.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member is now talking about certain payments made under some particular act which the Chair has difficulty in finding to be the Prairie Farm Assistance Act. I was wondering how he could relate the two because his motion definitely concerns the Prairie Farm Assistance Act.

Mr. Argue: My motion asks for the consideration of other amendments to provide adequate income support. I was leading up to making a plea to the government for consideration of a further change in this act because of the statements and commitments that have

been made by the government. They said they were going to put acreage payments on a permanent basis. We think that under the Prairie Farm Assistance Act consideration should be given to placing acreage payments on a formula basis with proper rules, so that farmers will know they are entitled to these payments on a given basis. We are suggesting now that it is time the government informed the house and the country whether what they said was just more Tory promises, more Tory window dressing, or whether the Prime Minister is going to fulfil the definite commitment to make these payments on a regular, annual basis. Before the election it was "vote for us and you will get it every year", and after the election no mention has been made of it.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Notwithstanding the eloquence of the hon. member, I still fail to find any relevance as to the point he is now discussing with amendments to the Prairie Farm Assistance Act. If he will consult his motion, he will see that the only act mentioned is the Prairie Farm Assistance Act. He refers to amendments to it and indicates a few, and also refers to the provision of other appropriate amendments. Since there is only one act referred to, I can only assume in interpreting the motion that the amendments referred to are amendments to the Prairie Farm Assistance Act. Therefore, perhaps he will come back a little closer to that act.

Mr. Argue: Mr. Speaker, we would not be fussy whether the legislative action that was promised with regard to acreage payments was undertaken by way of amendments to the Prairie Farm Assistance Act or was carried out by means of additional and separate legislation. The point is, of course, that acreage payments were promised and nothing has been done, and the farmers are waiting for some word from the government whether it is going to fulfil its definite commitment. The motion we are discussing asks for certain—

Mr. Horner (Acadia): I wonder whether the hon. member would permit a question. In his argument with regard to appropriate amendments to the Prairie Farm Assistance Act including acreage payments, is he suggesting that his party would support an amendment to that act to provide such payments?

Mr. Argue: If the government will put before the house a policy that will fulfil its commitment to the western farmers, I am sure it will receive the full support of this party. We do not think that haphazard hand-outs based on no policy at all are an adequate way to deal with what the Prime Minister