

*Adjournment Debate*

western Canada "but that it was of critical importance that we be perceived to be doing something; that we should arrange and stage a public relations effort" which would be perceived by people in that area as action by the government.

That is exactly what this program is, Mr. Speaker. It has been changed many times. Cattlemen and farmers in western Canada are trying to cut through the red tape but unfortunately they are not able to.

Here are some of the changes that have been made. First of all, they were told that eligibility for assistance meant that a producer must have 75 per cent of his crop insurance or guarantee of production to be eligible and he would receive \$70 per cow or bull up to \$140 per dairy cow and \$16 per ewe, of the basic herd. He was told he would receive one payment in 1980 and another in 1981.

When the announcement was made, it included the province of Manitoba and Saskatchewan and some parts of the province of Alberta. That was changed in midstream. To be eligible, cattle producers are required to be in a designated crop area—in an area where the crop harvested is less than 80 per cent of the average yield and where less than 60 per cent of the rainfall was between November 1, 1979, and May 31, 1980. There has been a great deal of change. When you only receive \$35 per cow and you expected to receive \$70 it does something to the economy and the supply of cattle feed, which is basically hay in our part of the country. In Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba the price of hay increased \$60 per ton after the original announcement that producers would receive \$70 per animal in the basic herd. Then that amount was cut to \$35 per animal. Also, instead of two payments there will be one and there may be a payment later. There is no commitment to that payment, just a statement that there may be one.

Some producers will receive payment without a check being made of their eligibility and others will not receive the payment until after their eligibility has been checked. This seems to be unfair and discriminatory and omits a lot of producers.

● (2215)

When the precipitation factor was introduced the fact that one part of Saskatchewan and the southern part of Alberta is short grass country was overlooked. Short grass country comprises most of the cattle area in Alberta. If the people who introduced the program have never heard of a winter drought they should start talking to the people who have been in that part of the country for a number of years. Unless the moisture is there in the winter and unless it is there the previous fall, the short grass will not grow. You can get all the rain you want, as that part of the country did early in the year, and it still will not produce the carrying capacity which is needed in the short grass country of southern Saskatchewan and southern Alberta.

Let us take a look at some of the other people who are neglected. For instance, what about the feed lot operators? What about the people who are feeding out the yearlings? That is not considered part of their basic herd, but their costs for hay have gone up again, \$60 to \$70 a tonne because of the

announcement of this program in its original form and then its withdrawal halfway through.

On September 19, I issued a press release asking that the deadline for applications be extended. I did this because I and my colleagues had received numerous complaints. Producers could not get through to the Zenith number. They were not able to get application forms to apply for assistance and they were afraid they would miss what little assistance was there. Two days later, on September 22, the government announced the deadline for submitting applications had been extended. But many areas are still ineligible. When you look at the border of Saskatchewan and Alberta, you will see that that area too should be considered for assistance.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but I have to advise him that his time has expired.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marcel Ostiguy (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate the hon. member for Kindersley-Lloydminster (Mr. McKnight) for his interest in Canadian agriculture as he is a member of the agriculture committee. I should like to correct some remarks he just made about the question he had put to the House on May 27, 1980 and which appears on page 1436 of *Hansard*.

On August 27, 1980, in Regina, Agriculture Canada announced that an amount of \$13.4 million would be given for the cattle and feed program. This program followed a press release published by the Minister of Agriculture concerning the drought aid program. This program complemented the \$41 million federal commitment to the Herd Maintenance Assistance Program announced last month by the Minister of Agriculture and the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and which aimed at ensuring that basic breeding herds would not be sold off because of feed shortages.

Of course, the regional offices in Winnipeg and Regina were administering this program for the cattle producers of north-western Ontario. A sharing agreement was developed for the Herd Maintenance Program in northwestern Ontario.

The assistance provided through the Herd Maintenance Program consisted of a \$70 payment and on this point I wish to correct the hon. member who told us earlier that it was \$140. It is \$70 for the dairy cow or the steer, \$35 for the steer or the cow and \$8 for ewes or rams up to 300 steer and dairy cows and up to 1,200 sheep.

On September 19, 1980, the province of Alberta announced the Feed Transportation Assistance Program.

The areas of Alberta considered for this program are the eastern parts of the province, the Peace River, Smith and Hondo sectors. This program was launched on July 1, 1980, and will last until March 1, 1981. On September 15 the provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan announced the continuation of their relief program for fodder and cattle.