

Government Orders

• (1220)

Mr. Bob Kilger (Stormont—Dundas): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to join in the debate on third reading of this bill, an act to amend the Crop Insurance Act.

I listened with great interest to the member for Saskatoon—Humboldt. I must commend him on his remarks. It is quite easy to see that he not only has a great amount of expertise in the area but speaks with a tremendous amount of passion on agricultural matters. You may think, Mr. Speaker, that as a relatively new member with virtually no agricultural background I am easily impressed, but I think all members in the House look upon members such as the one who spoke previously with a great regard.

I know we are not supposed to comment on who is and who is not here, but I see the parliamentary secretary on the government side, the member for Huron—Bruce, and the member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup who care tremendously with equal passion about agriculture.

In opening I should like to refer to remarks made by a colleague of mine, the hon. member for Algoma, as reported in *Hansard* of March 14 on page 9289 when he said:

This bill does some very good things. It provides for greater benefits to be paid under the crop insurance legislation, but the percentage of the premium is the problem. It does not provide for tripartite participation.

He continues:

Practically every farm organization in this country from the prairie pools to the Ontario government, to corn producers, to soybean producers have asked that the percentages be 33, 33 and 33.

That brings me to the words of the member for Mackenzie who indicated that this particular piece of legislation, Bill C-48, was inadequate. I believe it is just another example of the government's strategy, its diminishing commitment to Canadian agriculture. This legislation simply follows the trend established by this Conservative government to reduce agriculture support programs regardless of the financial hardship caused to our farmers.

It is becoming more and more obvious as the days go by that the government's Green Paper on agriculture entitled *Growing Together: A Vision for Canada's Agri-*

food Industry should possibly be renamed. I would suggest the title "Going Broke: A Blueprint to Dismantle Canadian Agriculture."

The reason behind crop insurance is clear enough. It is to provide protection for farmers who suffer crop loss. Obviously this is a very important program. It gives our farmers a measure of security against the many risks they face in growing their crops. It is therefore very unfortunate indeed that the federal government by way of Bill C-48 will continue to make farmers pay high premiums for crop insurance coverage.

High crop insurance premiums simply add to the increasing costs of farming. This financial burden is a factor in producers deciding to take out less insurance coverage. When farmers are forced to take less coverage, the demand for *ad hoc* programs such as the special grains program or the drought and flood relief programs is increased and perpetuated such as we have witnessed over the past several years.

I would like to refer to some comments of the Ontario Agricultural Commodity Council, a highly regarded group representing many commodity organizations such as the Ontario Apple Marketing Commission, the Ontario Bean Producers Marketing Board, the Ontario Cattlemen's Association, the Ontario Canola Growers Association, the Ontario Pork Producers Marketing Board, the Ontario Soybean Growers Marketing Board and many others.

Very briefly it says:

The major reason for crop insurance reform is to eliminate the need for *ad hoc* weather related relief assistance by providing an affordable and flexible program in which farmers will participate.

Bill C-48 does not provide adequate changes to the current Crop Insurance Act. It does not create an equitable sharing of the program's cost between the federal and provincial governments and the producer. It is clear that the primary objective of crop insurance reform is not achieved in Bill C-48.

A letter to the hon. Minister of Agriculture from the Ontario Pork Producers Marketing Board says it very well, simply and concisely. It reads:

Premium costs should be shared equally between the federal government, the province and the producer.

The Canadian Federation of Agriculture, again with regard to the tripartite program, says: