

agriculture which employs something like 20 per cent of the population from farm gate to consumer.

**Mr. Hovdebo:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the approach that the member has taken. It is very obvious, if we look at the Estimates, that there has been a considerable reduction. If we look very closely at the Estimates, we will find there is some fiddling in there that we have not quite got to the bottom of yet. If we take a look at the expenses of the Farm Credit Corporation we will be amazed at the increase that appears in the Estimates but does not appear in the operations of the Farm Credit Corporation.

In the last year and a half we have done some investigations of the impact of changes in government policy on the farmer or on the taxpayer. In some cases the taxpayer does not have to pick up the cost; in some cases it disappears. For instance, I mentioned the fuel tax rebates. That is going to be reduced by \$125 million this year and by 1991-92, with the excise and the sales tax back on, it is to cost farmers about \$260 million.

In the last session we had the elimination of two-price wheat which cost farmers \$240 million. We have increases in the stabilization levies I mentioned before which are now costing the farmer an extra \$91 million. The elimination of interest-free advances for farmers is costing them over \$27 million.

All those areas have a direct impact upon farmers. The crop insurance bill that we have before us in itself, according to the government Estimates, is to save it \$90 million in 1989-90 and \$110 million in 1990-91. Again that is an indirect attack on the farming economy, in that at a time when the farmers are really short of income they find themselves having to pick up more and more of the costs which over the years have been the costs of the government relative to its involvement in agriculture.

**Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie):** Mr. Speaker, during the course of the committee hearings on the crop insurance legislation, we heard representations from virtually all farm organizations indicating that the crop insurance program was quite inadequate in handling losses due to depredation by wildlife. There is a clause which deals with depredation under the Migratory Waterfowl Act. The American and Canadian governments have come together to provide some forms of assistance where

geese, cranes, or ducks move in on crops and clean them out. They provide a spot loss kind of adjustment process which normally occurs with a federal-provincial agreement each year, although there have been a few years when some of the provinces have failed to complete those agreements.

Has the hon. member any opinions on whether wildlife depredation by elk, deer, racoons, or blackbirds for that matter, could be treated on a spot loss basis something like hail damage is now? Could he speculate on why the government chose not to include that permissive possibility in the legislation?

**Mr. Hovdebo:** Mr. Speaker, one of the concerns of all the people who came before us was the division of sharing of costs. One-third, one-third, one-third was what they all wanted, which they did not get. A good number of these people suggested that waterfowl coverage should be changed to wildlife coverage.

To be fair, I have to say that the changes in the waterfowl coverage are somewhat of an improvement in that they have established a structure that makes it much clearer, because it will now be in the act and it will also pay relative to what the farmer got off the rest of the field in a spot loss, which it did not before. It was estimated by someone and the farmer got paid. One of my neighbours, for example, got \$600 in crop loss for half of his field and he took \$6,000 off the other half. This really was not a fair payment.

The insurance people tell us that wildlife damage can be claimed under spot loss insurance, but I know from discussing it with the farmers who were before us, farmers in my area and from personal knowledge, what can happen in the case of wildlife. A herd of elk in my area can eliminate a field of alfalfa in one night. The farmer cannot claim that under any of the insurance policies.

It does need some clearing up, and I see no reason why it cannot be put into the regulations in such a way as to cover these situations. We do it in other parts of insurance programs for crops, and there is no reason why we cannot recognize wildlife damage in such a way that the farmer can claim under the insurance programs presently in place.