

*Crop Insurance Act*

or that you turn to is the federal administration. That is the administration that will provide the relief or welfare that may become necessary, in the event of a disaster, to tide the people concerned over their difficulties. I only hope that the administration in the province of Saskatchewan will take heed of the many comments which have been made here. Although we have not necessarily covered all the areas we ought to, nevertheless, as federal legislators—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel):** Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but his time has expired.

**Mr. John Burton (Regina East):** Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words this afternoon on the crop insurance bill, which is a matter of great importance and concern to the people of Saskatchewan, my own province, as well as to all farmers across Canada. With respect to the amendments before the House this afternoon, I am sure that no hon. member can take objection to the provisions proposed in Bill C-185. Nevertheless, I think we have to examine some of these amendments within the framework of the performance and operation of this program to date, within the context of needs as they are developing within the agricultural and farming community at present, and in relation to new developments and new programs which may be considered either at present or some time in the future.

The Parliamentary Secretary in his remarks introducing this bill, outlined something of the history of the federal government's involvement and participation in crop insurance programs. That was a very useful background for the debate we have embarked on today and, of course, helped to set some matters in their context. Crop insurance has interested farmers across Canada and, particularly, in my province of Saskatchewan for a long time, partly because in my province there is a history of instability of production. That has been a characteristic of the agricultural industry in Saskatchewan. The provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan pioneered crop insurance legislation. They started their crop insurance programs without complementary federal legislation or participation.

The province of Saskatchewan, for example, commenced its program in 1961. The program was started on a very limited scale that year. As a matter of fact, it turned out that farming and crop conditions that year were disastrous, and this helped to prove the need for a crop insurance program. When federal legislation was introduced, it was of some help. Yet it was also immediately recognized that there were serious limitations to the legislation. It took a number of years, as the Parliamentary Secretary outlined, before we saw legislation on a federal level which complemented and assisted provincial programs and which was in keeping with the requests made by the provincial governments. This afternoon, I should like to examine briefly three points which I think

[Mr. Korchinski.]

are of concern and importance in dealing with this legislation.

● (2:40 p.m.)

First, why are more farmers not participating in this very important program? This point has already been raised by the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Gleave) and the hon. member for Mackenzie (Mr. Korchinski). They pointed out that for the last crop year for which reports are available, approximately 12,000 farmers in Saskatchewan participated in this program. Only 12,000 out of a total of 85,000 participated. That is not a very satisfactory state of affairs.

As the Parliamentary Secretary pointed out, there was a drop in the participation in the program last year. Only 9,000 farmers in Saskatchewan participated in the program. This was not because of a lack of interest on the part of the farmers. There are other causes which must be examined by both provincial and federal governments. The provincial and federal governments have a responsibility to examine this program to determine why farmers are not making greater use of it. Why is more use not being made of the program when there is such an obvious and great need?

In so far as my own province of Saskatchewan is concerned, a good deal of the blame can be laid at the doorstep of the provincial government of that province for not having pushed this program more in recent years. When the program was commenced in 1961 by the province of Saskatchewan, the province proceeded very cautiously. At that time, there was not the full participation that was required. As I already mentioned, the actions of the government of that day in proceeding very carefully in the initial stages of the program were well founded. They gained experience with the 1961 crop. If a widespread program had been in effect that year, the province would have been bankrupt.

At that time the program was new. Only the provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan were involved in the program. They had to gain experience in the administration of the program. It was necessary for them to gather a body of actuarial data which was very vital to the development of the program. This experience and data was gathered over a period of several years. After five or six years operation, sufficient data was gathered. In the view of people with experience and competence in dealing with this program, it was possible to embark on a campaign to help bring about widespread participation by farmers. This was not done by the province of Saskatchewan. As a result, there has not been complete success. It certainly would have been possible to achieve much greater success than has been the case up to the present.

In addition to this particular defect in operations, it is necessary for both the provincial and federal governments to examine this program very carefully to try and determine what has to be done in order to bring about the degree of participation which is required if this pro-