

Prairie Farm Assistance Act

Which is the one under consideration:

—were based on yields and acreages submitted by each individual applicant, and to accept changes at this late date would greatly confuse the matter in which these awards are made.

I had a little more experience with this act in 1957. That was before the Conservatives were responsible for it. At that time a very serious hailstorm swept across the Medicine Hat constituency. A number of farmers received P.F.A.A. and some did not. There was not a sufficient lowering of yields in that year to qualify on a broad basis because of drought. But when we pieced together the sections that were paid and the ones that were rejected it almost looked like a checkerboard, and to date I have not been able to find out what formula was used for paying one particular section and rejecting payment for a section right alongside it, when the hailstorm covered the whole area.

I just do not understand it. I have written to the department to ask for a detailed explanation of the formula they used in that particular case, or which they use in any case, and it is still not clear why they reject certain sections. I am not going to be so outspoken as the hon. member from Assiniboia and suggest that politics are involved, because frankly I do not believe they are. But they could be, and some people think they are. However, the fact is that I have never had a satisfactory explanation for the system adopted, that of paying one section and refusing to pay a farmer right beside that section under these hailed-out conditions, when we know that hailstorms do not respect one section any more than another. I think the farmers in this area are entitled to a detailed, clear explanation of how they are going to be paid, what qualifications are necessary, and why some of them are rejected. In August, 1961 the Department of Agriculture published a little pamphlet about P.F.A.A. Inside, under a paragraph headed "Basis for payments" it says this:

The average yield of wheat in a township or block of sections is the basis on which payments are made. If the average yield is eight bushels per acre or less, then all farmers within that area—with the exception of those on sections where the yield is 12 or more bushels—receive payment.

The next paragraph is:

The smallest isolated block of sections eligible for payment is one third of a township (12 sections) provided such a block is rectangular in shape.

I am satisfied that from the viewpoint of the practical application of this act this is not the formula used in determining whether one farmer should be paid or the application of another rejected, and I think this letter

I have from the officials clearly indicates that that is not the way they arrive at a decision in this case.

Mr. Woolliams: I wonder if I may rise on a question of privilege. The hon. member did say I had suggested that this was paid on an individual basis. What I said was that you had to be in the eligible block of 12 sections, with a section that might join on to that. I never suggested it was paid on an individual basis. The recipient must be in an eligible block. That is my point, and I must correct the statement which has been made as soon as I hear it.

Mr. Speaker: Order. These are not really questions of privilege and I must draw the attention of the house to the fact that corrections may be made at the end of a speech. One cannot just rise and take over the floor on a question of privilege. There is just a little too much of that. These points can be corrected in due course. Those people who know whereof I speak, might take note.

Mr. McIntosh: I wonder if the hon. member who is now addressing the house would tell us the date of the letter he received.

Mr. Olson: Yes, May 15, 1962.

All I was saying was this: the hon. member for Bow River suggested there should be amendments which would allow awards to be made on an individual basis. This pamphlet, which is supposed to explain to farmers on what basis they will be paid, states there must be a block of 12 sections. I am saying that this letter clearly indicates that in one area, at least, they did make a payment on an individual basis. I will read the words again:

In this regard we would like you to understand that all awards made in townships 15-15-W4th were based on yields and acreages submitted by each individual applicant.

Mr. Woolliams: Yes, but he must be within the 12-section block.

Mr. Jorgenson: I wonder if the hon. member would mind giving me the details of this particular case. I will be happy to look into it.

Mr. Olson: I shall be glad to do so. I wish to say, in fairness to the officials, that after I contacted them they agreed to make a further investigation with respect to this application.

The point I am making is that there is confusion as to what formula is used in accepting or rejecting applications which come in even from the same area. I say, in kindness, to the department, that I wish they would follow a consistent policy and let the farmers know what that policy is.

In closing I wish to say that inasmuch as the cost of production in farming throughout