

members who are supposed to be first since that is your choice, Mr. Speaker. I think it is an affront to Your Honour, an affront to me and an affront to a lot of Members of Parliament, that you are given a list by the parties and are expected to call the names in the order listed so that prearranged questions can be asked.

If it is the wish of the House to follow this practice, I suggest that the President of the Privy Council, as House leader, should prepare a formula to implement this arrangement so that Your Honour is no longer abused. I think this would eliminate much of the dissatisfaction that is apparent. I raise this point, not because there has been any particular abuse today, but simply because this is a device that is being used by the parties rather than by individual members of the House. Your Honour is being asked to do something that may be in conflict with your obligation to each and every member as equals in this House.

Mr. Speaker: I will not comment on the point made by the hon. member for Timiskaming, but I cannot resist commenting that the Chair has never felt bound by any list submitted to it. When whips or other representatives of parties have made suggestions to the Chair as to the order in which the original questions ought to be asked, I have received such suggestions as suggestions only. Hon. members whose names do appear on these lists know that this is not always a guarantee that they will be recognized. Orders of the day.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

CROP INSURANCE ACT

REIMBURSEMENT TO PROVINCES FOR PARTIAL ADVANCES ON CROP INSURANCE PREMIUMS

The House resumed, from Thursday, March 29, consideration of the motion of Mr. Whelan that Bill C-129, to amend the Crop Insurance Act, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Agriculture.

Mr. Bill Knight (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I rise to participate in this debate because of the importance of crop insurance to the constituency of Assiniboia and to western producers in general. Since the crop insurance program was introduced major changes have taken place, mostly at the provincial level, to make the program more attractive to the producers. The members of this party look forward to getting this bill through the House in order to reduce the premiums paid by farmers for crop insurance. Already farmers are purchasing crop insurance for this year, hoping that federal Members of Parliament will pass this legislation and reduce the premiums.

I asked the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) some questions today pertaining to crop insurance and the difficulties being experienced by farmers in my area. When the crop insurance program was introduced, the intention of the government was that it replace the Prairie Farm Assistance Act to a large degree; I am sure the minister

Crop Insurance Act

agrees with that. Many farmers found that particular act to be inadequate for their purposes. Once every five years my area dries out, and the farmers found PFAA to be of advantage to them.

With the introduction of the crop insurance program, it was assumed that PFAA would be phased out. Nevertheless, it continued in force last year, though the government had ceased to take the 1 per cent dockage, if I may call it that, on bushels of grain moved by western producers. In some areas the federal government paid out, and although one cannot complain at any pay-out made by the federal government, it did create some complicated situations.

The major problem was this. Under the Crop Insurance Act the benefits might be somewhat limited compared with amounts collected under PFAA. With the government holding up its decision on PFAA last year, many western producers in south and southwest Saskatchewan, not knowing whether it would be in operation, bought crop insurance. Then when the fall came the federal government decided, it being an election year, to continue PFAA in operation, and many farmers found they could not collect. Farmers all through the Bengough and Minton areas in my constituency were caught in a cross-fire between the two programs. I think this is one of the major reasons the percentage of votes gained by the Liberal party in this area was no higher than 14 per cent.

If PFAA continues in force, this complication will still exist. I have placed a motion on the order paper in my name which reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should consider the advisability of amending legislation to enable farmers to receive the benefits under the Prairie Farm Assistance Act, whether or not they are receiving at the same time benefits under the Crop Insurance Act, and to provide for additional funds to be made available for the grassland incentive program.

The reason I am moving that motion is to try to clear up the situation if both PFAA and crop insurance are available in any one year. The latter part of the motion relates to the grassland incentive program, and I am pleased to see that the government has answered the plea for increased funds for that program. Now many young producers in my area wishing to go into beef production can take cultivated acreage out of production.

In the area of crop insurance you have PFAA being phased out and the crop insurance program coming in. As I pointed out during the question period today, the sum of \$14,910,286 is left in the prairie farm emergency fund under PFAA. What we should be examining this year, particularly this spring, is a program that overlaps with crop insurance if there is widespread disaster. The hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) would be able to tell the House about the disaster in his area last year. We in southern Saskatchewan have experienced a winter of very little snow. I am told that the Souris River, which runs through part of my constituency, is down by at least a foot and a half this spring since there has been no run-off. Producers in the Scout Lake area of Saskatchewan are saying that their dug-outs have gone dry, and I can well believe them. We are facing one of the driest springs on the Prairies this year that we have faced for a long time. Because of lack of snowfall, we had one of the most unusual winters in a decade. We are also faced with