

Adjournment Debate

stantly reading about cases of people going off the deep end because of the pressures which modern society generates. The government should reorganize its priorities.

The hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Douglas) called the bill a law of the sea bill—women and children first. We can add one more category to that list and say: women, children, and sick folk. The government took on the 65 year-olds when it amended the Unemployment Insurance Act. It took on the lower income families when it cut off the indexing of the family allowances. Now we see it cutting back its responsibility for medical care. It is determined to destroy the program of medicare which was built with great success, by a provincial socialist government in this country.

May I call it ten o'clock, Mr. Speaker?

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. MacLean: Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the spokesman for the government if he can confirm the business we shall be discussing tomorrow.

Mr. Lalonde: Tomorrow we shall be concluding, we hope, third reading of Bill C-58.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40, deemed to have been moved:

GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION—GOVERNMENT POSITION ON CONTRIBUTION TO CROP INSURANCE FUND

Mr. Doug Neil (Moose Jaw): Mr. Speaker, up until a few moments ago the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) was in the Chamber. I am disappointed he has left because I am directing my remarks specifically to him.

● (2200)

On February 9, 1975, as reported at page 10742 of *Hansard*, I asked the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Chrétien) the following question:

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board. In view of the fact that under the Crop Insurance Act the federal government is committed to a certain level of contributions based on the number of farmers covered; in view of the fact that the crop insurance section has estimated that the required federal moneys for 1976 will be about \$62 million; and in view of the announcement by the minister that the amount of the federal contribution will be cut by about \$10 million, reducing the contribution to \$52 million, can the minister advise what will happen if the required contributions by the crop insurance board exceed \$52 million, and will he advise further when the government plans on obtaining additional funds, or will it renege on its commitments?

[Mr. Rodriguez.]

The President of the Treasury Board replied:

Mr. Speaker, this question is rather technical. I do not think I can give an answer at this time, but I think that all sectors of the economy, including this one, must participate in the federal government's restriction program.

Subsequently the President of the Treasury Board was good enough to write to me advising that if federal costs exceeded \$51,900,000 the requirements of the Crop Insurance Act would be honoured.

In the January 24 issue of the "Report on Farming", Mr. Glenn Gorrell, an official of the federal crop insurance board, is quoted as saying:

—we're just trying to encourage them (the crop insurance boards) to sell a minimum of insurance.

"This is a good time to take a hard look at crop insurance, because benefits seem to have escalated beyond costs. Are we restoring out of pocket costs to the farmer, or guaranteeing a profit?" he asked.

It is interesting to note as well that on February 9 the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Pelletier) in the adjournment debate stated that the Minister of Agriculture had written to the provincial ministers of agriculture explaining the reasons for restraint in the expenditures of the crop insurance program for 1976-77. It seems rather inconsistent that in his final paragraph the parliamentary secretary should state that it remains the intention of the government to support the crop insurance program as a primary means of assistance to producers who suffer severe crop losses as a result of natural hazards.

Since its inception the crop insurance program has become increasingly popular with the producers of western Canada, and each year sees an increase in the number of participants. Recently the various provinces in the prairies got together and decided to equalize their coverage in the prairie region. I think one could safely compare the crop insurance program with the unemployment insurance program which we have in Canada, because the crop insurance program provides the producer with a reasonable income to carry on in a year when he has suffered either partial or complete crop loss as a result of natural hazards. It is a program which is open to all producers, and a cut back in federal expenditure on this program can only lead to the shifting of the burden to the provincial governments, or to a reduction in the coverage that is available, or to a limit on the number of participants in the program. Will the provinces be required to turn to applicants who want to participate in the program and say, "We are sorry, we have not got sufficient money to allow you to participate"?

Since I came here in 1972 the Minister of Agriculture has always held himself out as a friend of the farmer. He spends a great deal of time travelling around the country telling the public what he has done to assist the farmer. I find it very difficult to understand that he personally would be party to any reduction in a program that was set up to assist the farmers in times of distress, and I would certainly like to hear him say publicly that he personally agrees with any cutbacks in the program.

We recently passed a grain stabilization bill, but of course this was presented to the House by a different minister because of the divided responsibility in the field of agriculture. At the moment I do not hear the government indicating any intention of cutting back on the con-