

**Hon. Mr. Crerar:** My honourable friend the Leader of the Government laughs. True, I have offered some criticism, not so much of this bill, but of the whole legislation it seeks to amend. I do feel that the suggestion made by our honourable colleague from Medicine Hat (Hon. Mr. Gershaw), that this whole matter should have a fresh survey, is a good suggestion. We cannot continue indefinitely paying these benefits out of the Treasury to western farmers and deny it to the farmers of other provinces, whose farming operations are of a different kind.

**Hon. Mr. Horner:** We are not denying it. The other provinces are getting help. They are getting the freight paid on our western grain.

**Hon. Mr. Crerar:** It is true the other provinces are given help in that way. But I come back to my point that, in my judgment, you cannot allow discrimination to continue permanently. That is why I heartily support the suggestion that, perhaps by a committee of this house if no other way can be found, this whole question should be examined afresh and efforts made to work out something that is sound in principle and equitable in the distribution of its benefits.

**Hon. W. M. Aseltine:** Honourable senators, I do not intend to speak at any length on this bill. The honourable senator from Blaine Lake (Hon. Mr. Horner) and the honourable senator from Medicine Hat (Hon. Mr. Gershaw) have explained the bill fully and intelligently.

I am quite sure that passage of these amendments will not mean that this legislation will cost the country any more than if they had not been passed. The fact is that up to the present time flaxseed and rapeseed growers have not been paying the 1 per cent levy, and there are great acreages of these crops in western Canada.

**Hon. Mr. Crerar:** But that acreage will derive the benefits.

**Hon. Mr. Aseltine:** That acreage has been getting the benefits up to the present time, provided it was in a low wheat production area, but made no contribution. In other words, the 1 per cent levy was not paid on the flaxseed and rapeseed marketed. For that reason, I cannot see why these amendments will mean any greater cost to the country.

Another point was brought out by the honourable senator from Medicine Hat, namely that there was some dissatisfaction with the manner in which the payments were made in two instalments, one in December

and the other in the next year. I understand the bill as presented provides that all payments will be made in December.

May I say I am in sympathy with the position taken by the honourable senior senator from Winnipeg (Hon. Mr. Haig) with respect to Manitoba. If I remember correctly, none of the land in which I am interested in Saskatchewan has ever qualified for assistance under the Prairie Farm Assistance Act; although we have been paying the levy for 20 years, neither the people who operate the farms for me nor I have benefited at all.

**Hon. David A. Croll:** Honourable senators, it is not usual for me to speak to a bill headed "Prairie Farm Assistance Act" but I have enjoyed this debate, particularly the byplay of the honourable senior senator from Winnipeg (Hon. Mr. Haig) and the honourable senator from Blaine Lake (Hon. Mr. Horner). I realize it is not a private fight and I can get into it if I want to.

**Hon. Mr. Haig:** Come on in, the water is fine.

**Hon. Mr. Croll:** I rise because of the fall from grace of my honourable friend from Churchill (Hon. Mr. Crerar), who took occasion tonight to point to the fall from grace of the honourable senator from Blaine Lake, who used to be the great free enterpriser in and outside of this house. But the honourable gentleman from Churchill, I think, forgot that it was during the time he was in office, when he held a cabinet post, that the Prairie Farm Assistance Act was brought into being.

**Hon. Mr. Crerar:** I mentioned that at the outset of my remarks.

**Hon. Mr. Croll:** Then it merely adds to my argument that he too has changed his mind. I made a quick calculation, and from the figures at my disposal I was able to find that this assistance to farmers cost the country \$202 million in 20 years. We collected from the 1 per cent levy a total of \$113 million. Thus in 20 years the net cost has averaged nearly \$5 million a year. That is the cost of one jet plane, that's all. That is what we are talking about. We have no hesitation in spending billions on defence, yet we quibble about \$5 million a year to needy farmers.

**Hon. Mr. Macdonald:** That was not the cost 20 years ago.

**Hon. Mr. Croll:** That is what it is costing us today, \$5 million a year.

**Hon. Mr. Macdonald:** \$5 million would have bought many planes 20 years ago.

**Hon. Mr. Brunt:** They didn't have jet planes 20 years ago.