

Supply—Agriculture

on the prairies and re-inspections became necessary because of that fact.

Mr. Argue: I would hope that the minister would consider the question I am about to ask under this item. I think it is as relevant as any discussion about prairie farm assistance can be. Is there any indication that certain areas will be brought under crop insurance during the coming year so that there may in fact be somewhat less money required for prairie farm assistance? The minister well knows that the provinces are complying with the federal legislation and passing complementary legislation to make it operative, but is there any indication that certain areas will in fact have the 25 per cent sign-up necessary to bring them under crop insurance?

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): Mr. Chairman, that will depend, of course, entirely on the governments of the provinces themselves and their legislatures but there is nothing in this item that pertains to this subject. There is no provision in this item in relation to crop insurance.

Mr. Argue: The minister misunderstood my question. I did not ask whether the province of Manitoba would provide some type of crop insurance scheme. My question was this. Has the government any indication that a given area or a number of areas will come under the crop insurance plans that are being provided?

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): I understand that there has been no conclusive indication in that respect but again that is a situation that could change as a result of provincial action.

Mr. Argue: The minister's statement tends to confirm my impression that a vast majority of areas in the prairie provinces do not consider the crop insurance plan set out in legislation passed last year sufficiently attractive in order to come under the provisions of the act and therefore exclude themselves from the provisions of prairie farm assistance. I think the scheme was misconceived in its various clauses, was brought in without the consent of the provinces and got off to a bad start. Worse still, there is not sufficient incentive for the vast majority of areas to get the 25 per cent sign-up which is the minimum requirement.

Item agreed to.

640. Estimated amount required to recoup the agricultural commodities stabilization account for the net operating loss of the agricultural stabilization board during the fiscal year 1959-60, \$57,661,176.

(Translation):

Mr. Boulanger: Under this item, we are asked to vote an amount of \$57,661,176 under [Mr. Fleming (Eglinton).]

the heading "Operating loss sustained by the agricultural prices stabilization board". That, Mr. Chairman, is the highest amount Canada has ever spent to support farm prices, since the passing of the Agricultural Prices Support Act in 1946.

If we look at the report, we find that the total amount spent under the act since 1946 is approximately \$100 million, including the losses arising from the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease, mainly in the western provinces, and which accounted for \$70 million of that amount.

Under the Liberal administration, from 1946 to March 1957, the Agricultural Prices Support Act cost \$25,052,806.98.

Now if you look at the expenditures for the past three years, that is since the Conservative government took over, you find that in 1958, Canada spent close to \$6 million, and in 1959, \$15,124,000. Now, for the year 1959-1960, we are asked to vote \$57,661,176.

That means that since the election of the Conservative government, it has cost the taxpayers the substantial amount of \$78,773,819 to support agricultural prices.

In short, therefore, it can be said that in the last 12 years of Liberal administration, it cost us \$25 million to support those prices, while in three years of Conservative administration, the amount expended was \$78 million.

(Text):

Mr. Speakman: Will the hon. member permit a question?

(Translation):

Mr. Boulanger: If I may, I shall go on with my remarks and you can ask your question when I have finished. Those are substantial amounts and no doubt did a lot of good to farmers. But did the Agricultural Stabilization Act, which the Conservative government introduced, help farmers to the extent called for by their requirements and by fairness? No, far from it. While farmers had been promised support prices tied to cost prices and set 12 months in advance, the government recently backed down on this plan.

Admittedly the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Harkness) did set interesting prices for certain commodities in 1958, 25 cents for pork and 44 cents for eggs; but what has happened since? Many businessmen, manufacturers, and