

closely by the other levels of government as well as by the public.

While these reports are fairly broad in scope, they do attempt to identify possible opportunities for development in Canada. The federal government's goal or hope is that—and I am now quoting from staff papers:

—the discussions with the provincial governments will lead to greater and increasingly more effective federal-provincial action to overcome regional disparities and to encourage economic and social development in the slow-growth parts of Canada.

I think that it is safe to predict, and the hon. member assumed correctly in his question on March 29, that the result will be a more integrated regional development strategy for this country.

AGRICULTURE—TERMINATION OF PRAIRIE FARM ASSISTANCE ACT—DISPOSITION OF FUNDS—POSSIBLE ESTABLISHMENT OF DISASTER PROGRAM

Mr. Bill Knight (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) present tonight to respond to the question I wish to ask. This is a most important subject.

On May 16 last I asked the following question in the House:

In view of the announcement of the minister that in the near future he hopes to introduce legislation to bring an end to PFAA, would he inform the House what will happen to the \$10 million in the PFAA emergency fund, and is the minister giving consideration to developing an over-all disaster program for western producers?

The minister replied by suggesting that the money would be handed out equally, etc. Actually, he did not give an answer and we want to give him an opportunity to answer tonight.

The point I am raising is this. We have now come to the point of providing crop insurance for the western producer. It is a substantially improved crop insurance program, and most farmers I think have taken out crop insurance. Therefore, we want to know on what basis the government is eliminating the Prairie Farm Assistance Act.

So far as I am aware, there have not been withdrawals from the prairie farm assistance fund for a number of years, and there is now slightly under \$10 million in that emergency fund which could be used, perhaps in conjunction with crop insurance, as a regional disaster fund. The fund could take the place of the PFAA fund, and could be used to assist farmers hit with disaster. I wish to cite three examples of disaster in this country. The minister could call this fund the Whelan fund, or the Whelan disaster fund, or whatever he likes. I think there would be considerable merit in using it to meet a disaster situation.

For example, last fall problems developed in the Peace River country. That region of the west was hit with disaster in the form of premature snowfall, and farmers did not get their crops out.

My second example is northeast Saskatchewan, where there has been a great deal of flooding and rain, to the extent that farmers have not even got their crops in the ground, and therefore crop insurance does not apply.

Adjournment Debate

The third example involves my area. There has been a severe outbreak of grasshoppers there, and the cost of using certain sprays has run as high as \$600 per farm. The sprays are not very effective. Some farmers have sprayed two or three times, yet lost one-third of their crops. If the kind of fund I suggest had been established, it could be used to render assistance in meeting the cost of spraying, and this could be done through the different municipalities involved. I have had lots of letters regarding the outbreak of grasshoppers.

If we can assist a specific area that has been hit with a severe outbreak of grasshoppers, it will be of benefit to the entire crop area. The minister has been asked about using Dieldrin to wipe out grasshoppers, but the government has refused because of concern about its effect on the environment. Present sprays are not nearly as effective.

The cost is mounting and the farmers are becoming extremely frustrated. This is happening in a year when there is a real need for every bushel of grain we can get in terms of domestic and world demands.

I hope the minister will respond to my request to establish a regional disaster fund which would override crop insurance to take care of particular problems that develop. I want to point out that the Standing Committee on Agriculture passed a motion agreeing in principle with this idea. The Conservative party voted against it, and every Tory who comes from the dried out areas of Saskatchewan or Alberta should hang his head in shame. The hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) and the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) were not at that committee meeting. If they had been there, it might have been different.

In spite of the announcement in the *Globe and Mail* that there is no grasshopper problem, I want to tell the minister the grasshoppers are there chewing away and we are having a hell of a time trying to kill them.

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, my press clipping service shows me one thing, and that is that more papers than the *Globe and Mail* have indicated the grasshopper issue is not as bad as we expected it to be. Reports which I received in my office indicate there are certain problem areas where the little grasshoppers are chewing away at certain crops. My reports also show the grasshopper infestation is caused by different batches. Regardless of what spray we use, we have to spray more than once, whether it is dieldrin or something else.

The hon. member has asked what will happen to the \$10 million in the PFAA emergency fund. In my press release I stated, and I quote:

Whatever money is left after payments are completed for the 1973 year will be used for the benefit of prairie farmers.

The suggestions by the hon. member are recorded and will be recognized. Possibly they will be referred to from time to time. Of course, we have to work very closely with the provinces. This infestation is not just in the dried out areas, but in areas of northern Saskatchewan that are very wet. There are some 4,000 farmers in those areas, 2,000 of which have crop insurance and 2,000 which do not. How do we use that fund? If a man took out crop insurance, he should be entitled to payment in government funds just as