

I would like to call the attention of honourable senators to the fact that in 1939 the Prairie Farm Assistance Act was passed after several very dry years. That act was passed for the purpose of giving the farmers drought relief. I know something about the operation of it in the province of Saskatchewan where it has worked out quite well, and many farmers wish it continued in force even though the maximum relief that can be obtained in any one year under that act is \$800 per farmer.

I might say that in the district in which I carry on my farming operations we have not had a crop failure since 1937. That is quite a record, because there were crop failures in 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933 and on up to 1937. The crop in 1937 was, I think, the worst I ever grew. In fact, we did not thresh anything on our lands in my home district that year.

Hon. Mr. Connolly (Ottawa West): Why? Was it because of drought?

Hon. Mr. Aseltine: We had had no rain whatever, and of course we were not farming as well in those days as we are now, and the crop just did not grow. We had absolutely nothing.

It was probably as a result of that experience that the Prairie Farm Assistance Act was passed in 1939. Under that act every farmer, no matter who he may be, pays one per cent of the amount he obtains for his crop when he delivers it to the elevator. That amount of one per cent is deducted from the purchase price. On crops of wheat, oats, barley and flax—although flax was not in this category at the beginning—we have been paying this amount of one per cent all these years. I am happy to say that I have never yet qualified for prairie farm assistance on any of my lands, but I am quite content to pay my share of the cost because it helps to build up the fund so that others who have suffered crop failures can obtain this form of relief.

Hon. Mr. Roebuck: You have the protection.

Hon. Mr. Aseltine: However, the Prairie Farm Assistance Act did not give individual coverage. If a certain number of sections of land which surrounded your land did not qualify, it made no difference; the whole area qualified and each person was able to obtain the assistance. It was never on an individual basis. One man might be located 10 miles away from the area which I have just mentioned and even though he had no crop at all he could not get any relief under the Prairie Farm Assistance Act.

On account of this, many farm organizations all over the country kept asking for some form of crop insurance. Also, in Saskatchewan a commission was set up to study

the economic future of the province. After a thorough study lasting two years or more and costing quite a large sum of money, the commission brought in its report recommending, among other things, the adoption of some form of crop insurance. Finally, the government of the day brought in the Crop Insurance Act of 1959. We are amending that act today at the request of certain provinces, for the purpose of establishing a crop reinsurance plan. This has been fully explained by the former speakers, and I do not intend to elaborate.

It was suggested to me by an honourable senator who is familiar with farm matters in western Canada, that there might be some overlapping in the Province of Saskatchewan because that province has municipal hail insurance. He suggested that I should explain this to honourable senators when I spoke this afternoon.

It is quite true that we have municipal hail insurance and that every farm is insured to the extent of \$5 per acre against loss by hail. However, any person who does not wish to carry that insurance and chooses to insure his crops against hail in a line company, can opt out of the Municipal Hail Insurance Act. There may or there may not be some overlapping. The person who opts out and who signs up for crop insurance under the Crop Insurance Act would get nothing more than what he would get in case of loss under that act; but if he did not opt out he would get his municipal hail insurance in the case of a loss by hail and he would also get whatever he was entitled to under the Crop Insurance Act. But in that case he would be paying two premiums: he would be paying a premium to the Municipal Hail Insurance Association, which is collected in the form of taxes by the municipality in which he resides, and he would also be paying a premium under the Crop Insurance Act.

I think that what I have said will make the picture clear to honourable senators. That is one of the reasons why I am speaking today. I adjourned the debate last evening, not for the purpose of holding up the bill, but simply to read what the other speakers had said and to decide whether it was necessary to deal with anything else.

One matter which I think has not been fully explained is that under the Prairie Farm Assistance Act, when the farmer takes his wheat to the elevator, one per cent of the selling price of the grain is deducted, but when he comes under the Crop Insurance Act he gets a card, which he takes with him when he goes to the elevator with his grain, and the elevator company does not deduct the one per cent. However, the difficulty has been that