

Crop Insurance Act

land. He did not do so and all I can say is that it was a disappointment.

I do not intend to hold up the bill any longer. There isn't any objection to it because it doesn't do very much. Whether it is 50 per cent of the premiums, or 50 per cent of the administration and a shift, or if some sections of the country in the west will perhaps benefit a little more monetarily because of the shift from 50 per cent one way to 50 per cent the other way, in terms of Ontario, about which the minister knows a little, certainly in terms of eastern Canada the benefit in dollars to the farmers is really no more than a pittance. It would have been of benefit if the resolution passed by all members of the committee had been attended to by the minister and if he had risen at the beginning of this debate and told us what he intended to do about that resolution.

If he is prepared to do so now, I will sit down. But I still want to say in summary that the minister, as a parliamentarian, has been exposed to the committee on agriculture when there have been many more contentious items before it. The debates may have at times appeared to be a filibuster, for good or evil, depending upon which side of the table you sat on, but certainly the farmers of this land were always the main concern, even if there was a misinterpretation of how you helped them. But he ought not to malign the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) publicly, regardless of what he said to the mushroom growers. And that was sort of apocryphal in terms of the crop; it is a great crop, we love mushrooms and we love mushroom growers. However, I think it is perhaps allegorical that the minister should say now that his notes were out of order. We all read what the press reports quoted him as saying in Alberta about my hon. friend from Peace River, and he knows that when there are 13 members wishing to speak on a farm bill, with two days of debate, a total of 16½ pages in *Hansard*—two pieces of a day—and then only two committee sessions, this is not a filibuster. I expected more from the minister, just as the farmers of the land expect more from the minister by way of crop insurance, support prices and a meaningful agricultural policy they can start to build on rather than keep shifting their gears as the policy of the government shifts.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I think I should draw the attention of the House to the fact that the minister requires unanimous consent if he is to speak at this time, having moved third reading of the measure: that would ordinarily be considered as a contribution. Is it agreed that the minister be permitted to speak?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Knight: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I happen to want this bill passed. If the House would agree to sit until about ten minutes after six o'clock I would be prepared to restrict my remarks to about five minutes so that we could get this bill through and benefit farmers throughout Canada. I should like to say a few words on crop insurance, period.

[Mr. Nowlan.]

An hon. Member: Send a letter to the minister.

Mr. Knight: I think I have a serious matter to bring up.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There seems to be agreement on this point. However, I would remind the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Knight) that he is not prevented from speaking after the minister has spoken. However, I have recognized the minister at this point.

Mr. Paproski: Mr. Speaker, I think we should set a time limit and that it should be ten past six.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I cannot recognize the hon. member, otherwise eminently recognizable, because of his situation in the House.

Mr. Baker: If it is the case that the hon. member is willing to give an undertaking to ensure that the bill will pass, and if a time limit is imposed on the hon. member for Assiniboia as well as on the Minister of Agriculture, perhaps we should agree, if we agree on anything, to extend the sitting to ten after six by the clock opposite, and no longer.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair is prepared to sit here until Christmas, as far as that is concerned—

An hon. Member: A good idea.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: However, unless the minister indicates that he will finish in time to give the hon. member for Assiniboia his opportunity, I do not see how we can make a decision.

Mr. Whelan: I agree to the suggestion, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Bill Knight (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I should like to speak about crop insurance. The hon. member from Annapolis Valley (Mr. Nowlan) referred to a motion in the committee. I should like to refer to another. In the committee we recommended to the minister a motion related to crop insurance having to do with the old PFAA fund and what could be done with it. My point is this. A general crop insurance program is in existence in Canada today. The government of Saskatchewan has passed a bill to improve that legislation. Further legislation has been presented by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) to bring about a reduction in the premiums, the only legislation which has been forthcoming from the hon. gentleman.

I wish to point out that there are some areas which crop insurance does not cover. I refer to disasters which affect local regions alone. For example, parts of northern Saskatchewan were flooded this year and for the most part the farmers concerned were not covered by crop insurance. The constituency of Assiniboia experienced serious losses due to grasshoppers in certain municipalities. This caused heavy losses for producers.

The committee recommended that what is left in the old PFAA emergency fund be used as a base for establishing a regional disaster fund, flexible in nature, which could be used in cases of severe damage not covered by crop insurance on a regional or national basis. I said this fund could be called the Whelan regional disaster fund, or anything