

Prairie Farm Assistance Act

The Pope Committee which investigated some accusations made years ago pointed out that all of the supervisors were political appointees and that most of them were former candidates of the Liberal Party. All this has been said today, but no one from the other side has risen to defend the party. I can remember a former Liberal member for Assiniboia, who is now in the other place, Senator Argue, who used to speak at length about what a great tool PFAA was. If he were in the House today he would have something to say about the death of this legislation which served his constituency so well for 34 years. He would have something to say about why it can no longer function to provide a reasonable amount of security in hardship years for the area of Assiniboia. He often advocated in this House that the \$800 maximum payment to each farmer be raised to \$1,200, and at one time I believe he introduced a private member's bill to that effect. It would be as easy to justify raising it to \$1,600 as it is to justify crop insurance in that amount.

There were faults in the act, and a good deal of politics was played in the administration of it. Those areas that had good crops claimed they paid a levy of one per cent to the PFAA and of course rarely collected anything. Those areas that were low yielding had a record of collecting nearly every year, or at least about three-quarters of the time. As a representative of one of the areas where high protein wheat was grown I can say that we felt the PFAA payment was merely a bonus for growing that wheat. We brought in protein grading, but there is no bonus for growing high protein wheat. You get the same price for it as for any other type.

Before this legislation passes, Madam Speaker, I think we should be told exactly how much money is in the fund, when operations under the Grasslands Incentives program and LIFT program actually ceased, and who authorized the people within the Regina, southern Saskatchewan and the Battleford-Kindersley riding to spend that money prior to the 1974 election. It certainly was not done under the authority of the director of PFAA. Have those accounts been paid and, if so, under whose authority? We certainly should be told far more than we have been told this afternoon.

I am disappointed at the government's attitude toward its duty to be accountable in the face of the accusations made here. In a democracy such as ours no one should be able to stand up in the House of Commons and make accusations of questionable administration and questionable handling of finances without someone in the government rising to set the record straight. There has been no attempt to do so thus far.

Mr. Whelan: Madam Speaker, on a point of order and just to set the record straight, on December 12, 1974, the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) directed a question to me asking if an investigation was going on. I replied, as reported at page 2189 of *Hansard*:

Mr. Speaker, the inquiry is not completed, so far as I am concerned, but I was in the province of Alberta the day before yesterday and the preliminary reports contain enough information in my view to show that what took place was grossly overstated.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): Order, please. This is a point for debate. Perhaps the hon. minister could make those comments when he closes the debate.

[Mr. Horner.]

Mr. Whelan: Madam Speaker, on a question of privilege, then, on behalf of the people—the innuendo that has been heard while this is before the court. It is before an inquiry at the present time. How can anyone really speak on that when an inquiry is going on? That is what I would like to know?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Horner: Because there is an inquiry going on—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Horner: In my 17 years in the House of Commons, Madam Speaker, I have never seen that kind of demonstration before—a deliberate clapping to attempt to use up the clock—to filibuster their bill so they will not be accountable for their sins. The minister stands up and says these investigations are before the courts. There is nothing before the courts. He is a member of the House of Commons, and every member of this House of Commons should advise in this debate today what they want the RCMP to investigate, what they want the Auditor General, who took the photographs, to look for in his investigation. It is their duty as representatives of the people to advise the RCMP and the Auditor General what to look for in their investigations. The government is not doing a very good job of accounting for their expenditure of the farmers' money.

An hon. Member: Six o'clock.

Mr. Horner: May I call it six o'clock, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Whelan: On a point of order—

Some hon. Members: Six o'clock.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): It being six o'clock—

Mr. Lefebvre: I rise on a point of order, Madam Speaker. Just to make sure there is no misunderstanding and that this debate can continue at some other time, I should like to move, seconded by the hon. member for Renfrew North-Nipissing East (Mr. Hopkins):

That this debate be now adjourned.

Mr. Horner: Madam Speaker, I have the floor. The hon. member rose on a point of order. He cannot rise on a point of order and move the adjournment of the debate until he gets the floor. I will adjourn the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): The hon. member for Crowfoot.

Mr. Horner: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, the hon. member, the whip of the government party, cannot move the adjournment of the debate without first having the floor. He rose on a point of order. I called it six o'clock, assuming that would be the adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): Order, please. A motion is made by the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) as follows:

That the debate do now adjourn.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?