

I have to tell my honourable friend that I doubt that I can encourage him to think that a decision will be reached before the end of this month. I think we will have to push hard to achieve that date. As far as I am able to do so, I will urge my colleagues to take speedy action on this matter. Coming from the west, I have some idea of what it means.

Senator Argue: Honourable senators, perhaps I should clarify the parameters of this crop insurance. It is much less in gross income than one would receive from an average crop.

Senator Roblin: Oh, yes.

Senator Argue: It is based on 70 per cent of the average yield at a given price per bushel. What is most discouraging is that some of those farmers have had three or four crop failures in a row. By the provisions of the Crop Insurance Agreement, they are no longer insured for 70 per cent of a normal yield, but for 49 per cent of a normal yield. I hope I do not get the inference that because \$500 million is paid out in crop insurance somehow it will be deducted following consideration of the request that \$50 per acre be paid out to top load, so to speak, the crop insurance program. There is a virtually unanimous feeling among farm organizations and farmers in the areas concerned that this kind of pay-out is necessary, and it is.

I would also like to ask the leader about the \$48 million paid to livestock producers. Of that sum \$16 million went to Saskatchewan, \$30 million to Alberta and \$2 million to Manitoba which, as the minister said, suffered drought only in some small but important areas. \$30 per cow, was paid into the Saskatchewan treasury instead of to the cattle producers. The reason I am asking that question is that, when the announcement was made, Premier Devine, the Premier of Saskatchewan, said "Our government is putting in \$60 per head and we are on our way to Ottawa to get them to match it." At that time, every publication in the west remarked on the fact that it was \$60 and that there might be another \$60. In fact, the *Saskatchewan Report*, which, if you can judge by the articles in it, surely is not a partisan publication, said at the time that the producers might get \$120. I do not know if this *Saskatchewan Report* is in the same category as the *Alberta Report*, but Saskatchewan had to copy Alberta, so now we have a publication called the *Saskatchewan Report*.

● (1440)

However, I am asking why John Wise, who purports to speak for the farmers, agreed to send the \$30 to the Saskatchewan treasury instead of to the beef producers to whom it belongs.

Senator Roblin: If I were flip, I would probably say, for the same reason that the previous government decided to send the railway money to the railways rather than to the farmers to whom it belonged.

Senator Argue: And I hope they keep on paying it to the railways, because if they do not, the price of wheat will drop 50 cents per bushel, and the farmers cannot afford any further drop in the price of wheat. That is why it was paid to the railways.

[Senator Roblin.]

Senator Roblin: I am sure my friend will allow me the opportunity to attempt to answer his questions.

Senator Argue: Just don't twist it up with something else.

Senator Roblin: Why shouldn't I? You are complaining because the government is funnelling money in a certain direction. It is relevant, surely, to consider other examples of the same thing.

Senator Frith: You said you would do that if you were being flip, but you aren't.

Senator Argue: That is how the rules work.

Senator Roblin: You are a good one to know how loose the rules are—

Senator Argue: I said "the rules."

Senator Roblin: As a matter of fact, I am rather pleased that my honourable friend thinks there are some rules in this place, because sometimes some of us rather wonder whether that is the case. However, I simply want to emphasize to him that, regardless of the basis on which it is calculated, half a billion dollars from the crop insurance is a substantial contribution. My honourable friend raises an interesting point and that is that the present rules governing crop insurance deal with consecutive cumulative losses. That is a policy in the crop insurance plan that needs to be revisited. I think we should look at that again, and I think I am correct in saying that it is the intention of the minister to look into that aspect because, if we do have a sustained series of crop losses, then the cumulative aspect becomes rather important and, if it is not working equitably, then it should be changed. That is something that will be looked into.

With respect to the other question as to why the Minister of Agriculture decided to have the money distributed through the Government of Saskatchewan, I think I will ask the minister to provide me with the answer to that, because obviously it is not within my knowledge. At the same time, I will also ask him whether he made the same offer to Manitoba and Alberta.

Senator Argue: I think Alberta has done it in a cleaner fashion than has Saskatchewan. I understand they announced \$45, so \$45 plus \$30 is \$75, and they did not pretend that they were paying \$60, or some other figure, and then refuse to go forward and pay that amount plus \$30 to the cattle producers.

I ask the Leader of the Government in the Senate if he is prepared to take the concerns of the Senate in this matter to the cabinet and suggest to the cabinet that, even at this late date, the Minister of Agriculture or, better still, the Prime Minister should get in touch with the Premier of Saskatchewan and say that there was a genuine misunderstanding of what the government's intention was. From the farmers' standpoint, they felt it was completely clear, but somebody must have misunderstood. The price of hay is now \$120 to \$150 per tonne and the farmers need the money. So, would the Prime Minister ask the Saskatchewan government to loosen up and take the money provided by the taxpayers of Canada and send it to the beef producers? Will the Leader of the Government in