

Prairie Farm Assistance Act

cent to 2 per cent. As the hon. member for Assiniboia said, the levy is a co-operative effort between the farmers and the government and it also involves co-operation between some farmers and other farmers. In other words, if the levy is the result of co-operation amongst the farmers themselves, this amendment might go too far and discriminate against those farmers who have been continually paying the levy over the years but who have received no benefit from it. When the levy is set at 1 per cent, it might not be too bad, but at 2 per cent it might be quite serious.

Here is another question. If we were to implement the suggestions made by the hon. member for Assiniboia, both today as a Liberal member and in former years as a member of the New Democratic party, would 2 per cent cover the cost?

Mr. Argue: I rise on a question of privilege—as a member of the C.C.F. party.

Mr. Woolliams: Well, I do not know, but I thought the hon. member ran for leadership of the New Democratic party. I do not know if I am wrong in that regard, but perhaps I could ask the new leader of that party. He was there at the convention. I was not invited.

In any event, coming back to the problem, I may say that over the years this financial assistance has totalled more than a quarter of a billion dollars, and it has been contributed half by the government and half by the farmers. There have been a number of amendments to this measure introduced by this government. When the hon. member for Assiniboia strikes out at us as if we had done nothing, I think I should put on the record a few of the amendments we have introduced. I am not suggesting that the hon. member and other hon. members did not make some suggestions with regard to these amendments.

The first one with which I want to deal provides that sections of land having a yield of 12 or more bushels of wheat per acre are removed from both payment and computations to determine category of award. This will enable the making of payments to the farmers who suffered a loss more in proportion to their loss. This was important because at one time the people who lived in an eligible block, even though the block complied, might get 30 bushels to the acre, a yield greater than the eight bushel average, and those below that average were getting payments under this act. As I have indicated this situation was changed in 1958.

I have a copy of some of these changes here and I am just going to read them because I can do it in less time. The six section limitation as to the size of blocks for both the exclusion of high yield areas in eligible

townships and the payment of low yield areas in ineligible townships has been repealed. In future any section of land having a yield of 12 or more bushels will simply be excluded from payments, and any one or more sections in an ineligible township having a yield of eight or less bushels will be paid if they are contiguous to an eligible township. The effect of this, of course, is that it also reduced the size, and the sections that bordered on the eligible area were also included. At one time you had to have a block of six sections.

The third amendment was that the regulation excluding from payment farmers having other full time occupations has been repealed. In future anyone farming land will qualify for award regardless of other occupation. That amendment was introduced in 1958 when the present Minister of National Defence (Mr. Harkness) was minister of agriculture.

The section of the act excluding from award all crown lands which had not been sold or granted until after 1940 has been repealed. This was considered discriminatory and in future all such lands will qualify. This affects our early Canadian friends, the Indians on the reservations, and there are two of them in the Bow River riding, namely, Morley and the Blackfoot reservation at Glietzen. They paid the levy under the act but they never qualified until this amendment was passed.

I shall digress for a moment to say this was a good act; it was brought in by the Liberal government. but many changes were made in it by the present government, and properly so. I think all this legislation dealing with farm problems is rather like children growing up. There are certain changes which must take place in order to make the legislation work.

The fifth amendment was that the minimum size of an isolated area that suffered a loss of crop was reduced from 18 sections to 12 sections. The big trouble there was when there was a township with 18 sections, if a few people on one side of the 18 sections brought in a crop over 18 bushels then all of them did not qualify.

We broadened the act so that now there are more payments going out to farmers than ever before. The sixth amendment is that in townships where less than 10 per cent of the seeded area is sown to wheat it will now be possible to use the predominant coarse grain crop as the index in determining eligibility. In the past only wheat could be used, regardless of the acreage sown. I remember in an area called Cochrane, in the Bow River riding, where they do not grow wheat, one year one farmer had eight acres of wheat and because it went to 25 bushels the act did not

[Mr. Woolliams.]