

Government Orders

helping ordinary Canadians. That is the real failing of the government.

As the member for Mackenzie pointed out, Clause 4 of the bill allows this government and future federal governments to negotiate with the provinces with respect to cost sharing. There is nothing that hinders that ability in the amendment put forth by the member for Mackenzie. His motion simply gives some assurances to farmers and producers of western Canada and across the country that the government is going to commit itself to paying 25 per cent of the crop insurance premiums. It is not asking too much for the government to put its legislation where its mouth is. That is all we are asking. For the minister to stand up and make those comments is an outrage, and it is an insult to western Canadians.

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister of State (Grains and Oilseeds)): Mr. Speaker, I was in the House listening to the member from Moose Jaw. He kept using the word "politics", and said we are playing politics.

I wish the member would read the wording of the bill under which crop insurance is presently enacted. It is the bill that provides the details and the administrative and legal framework for the agreements which the federal government signs with the provinces. He would see that the wording is very similar to that of the present bill. If he saying that we are playing politics with the bill that is before the House, he is, by implication, saying that we have been doing the same thing for the last 20 or 25 years during which crop insurance has operated.

With regard to politics, it may be useful to look at how various political stripes of governments have treated farmers. My province had an NDP government until two years ago. One can look at the amount of money we spent federally in the province of Manitoba and the amount of money that was spent provincially. I am sure that producers would be interested to know that for the last year in which the NDP was in power in Manitoba, it contributed something like 8 per cent of all the money spent directly to support agriculture, as opposed to the federal government spending 92 per cent.

If the hon. member wants to talk politics, first of all I would suggest that he read the legislation that crop insurance presently operates under and compare it to the wording we have in front of us in the amendment. He would have to admit that it is very similar and that this bill is going to provide considerable advantage to producers that they do not have now under the present legislation. If he would go back and examine again the record of the last NDP government in the province, he would see who was playing politics and who was there for the farmers in terms of support. I will back our Minister of Agriculture's word and commitment to agriculture to anybody and any NDP government from coast to coast in the country.

Mr. Ray Funk (Prince Albert—Churchill River): Mr. Speaker, I was interested to hear the minister admonish the member for Algoma by saying that he had not been in Prince Albert when the discussions on this took place.

I was in Prince Albert, that being my home town. I was not party to the closed door discussions, but I was at the press conference and heard the explanations to the media and other interested parties when the minister announced the agreement which had been reached. There was no hint in the words of the minister at that time that there might be anything less than a 50 per cent contribution from the two combined levels of government or that a possibility existed in the legal framework that by some action of some government, farmers could end up picking up 60, 70 or 80 per cent of the cost of premiums. That was no part of the discussions at all.

The minister knows that he very clearly left the impression that the federal share would be 25 percent, the provincial share would be 25 per cent, and the farmer's share would be 50 per cent. That is very important to hammer home. As the hon. member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre so clearly said, what the farming community needs is some certainty and security and it needs to get away from *ad hoc* programming. Helpful as it may be from time to time, certainly it does not encourage somebody to go the bank another year to get another loan or young people to get into farming. There has to be security for the farmer.