

The bill also provides, as I have mentioned—and this should encourage participation by the provinces, and it should encourage participation by individual farmers—for an increase in the federal contribution to premiums from 20 to 25 per cent.

As I have indicated, I shall be prepared to discuss these amendments in detail when the bill is before the house. I trust hon. members will give their favourable consideration to the resolution at this stage.

I would also point out that the amendments proposed provide for insurance coverage which will reimburse a farmer for costs incurred in preparing summerfallow which the farmer could not seed in the normal seeding season because of excessive moisture. The bill provides for extended coverage of this type to be provided in agreement with a province.

There are two other minor amendments which I shall not mention at this time; they can be dealt with on second reading. Before closing I should like to express my concern about some remarks which have been made in connection with crop insurance in recent weeks. There have been suggestions that the present act does not provide for spot coverage on individual crops. This is interpreted to mean that under the present federal legislation a province cannot produce a program which will provide for the settlement of claims other than on an entire farm or an entire crop basis. While it is true that present programs in effect in the prairie provinces make it compulsory to insure all of a specific crop and provide only for indemnities on the basis of the entire acreage seeded to that crop, the federal act does not in fact prohibit the issuance of insurance which would provide indemnities on the basis of losses pertaining to a portion of that crop or with respect to selected fields. It would, however, seem evident that premium rates based on spot settlement would possibly be much higher than those based on the loss related to the entire acreage seeded to any crop on any farm.

There has been some criticism, too, that the federal act does not provide coverage for forage crops such as corn, hay and pasture. In actual fact, the act places no limitation on the crops which may be covered and defines the term crop as meaning an agricultural crop declared by the regulations to be a crop for the purposes of the scheme. The crops listed under the regulations at present are: (a) wheat, (b) oats, (c) barley, (d) rye, (e)

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flaxseed, (f) grain corn, (g) buckwheat, (h) soybeans, (i) potatoes, (j) sugar beets, (k) tobacco, (l) sunflower seed, (m) rapeseed, (n) apples, (o) pears, (p) peaches, (q) plums, (r) cherries, and (s) apricots.

Mr. Danforth: Members on this side of the house have certainly listened with interest to the Minister of Agriculture introducing this resolution on the subject of crop insurance. We can well appreciate the reason the government has been placed in the position once again of having to amend this particular piece of farm legislation. For many years all major farm groups have been advocating that crop insurance be provided to each farmer on a basis which would afford him recompense for losses due to nature.

The fact that so few farmers have so far taken advantage of the Crop Insurance Act, even though four provinces have now agreed to accept the principles and work it out with the federal government, indicates that amendments were needed. The fact remains that farmers still did not feel that this measure provided the necessary protection. As a result they have not been taking full advantage of the crop insurance provisions even though, as was pointed out by the minister, by the 1964 amendment the federal government did agree to pay 20 per cent of the farm premiums.

Farmers today are keen businessmen. If something were offered to them as a bargain, the government paying 20 per cent of the premiums, they would certainly investigate it thoroughly. Nevertheless farm groups in Ontario, after investigating the farm credit insurance provisions put forward by this government, did not feel they could recommend to the provincial government that full advantage be taken of this particular measure.

I was interested tonight to hear the Minister of Agriculture say he had held consultations with various provincial ministers of agriculture and that this subject had been discussed in depth. I have no doubt it is because of these meetings and because of the views expressed by the provincial ministers that the amendments of which the minister spoke tonight are to be incorporated in the new legislation.

I hope that these meetings have been responsible for amendments to the act which will make the legislation adequate to provide for the losses which can be expected every year in some part of every province of Canada.