

pay more than 50 per cent. That was the whole reasoning behind the amendment in the first place.

**Mr. Mazankowski:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member, in part answered his own question, inasmuch as the precise share is technically spelled out in the agreements that are negotiated between the federal government and the province. That is what that whole clause outlines.

As far as we are concerned, we ensure that we are going to be incorporating the sharing arrangement of 25-25-50. That will be reflected in each of the agreements that are negotiated. My legal people tell me that that flexibility has to remain within the context of this particular bill to preserve the principles and to maintain the consistency of the act.

**Mr. Rod Laporte (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I am amazed at the comments just made by the hon. minister. It is very clear that the government is doing nothing more than simply playing politics with the producers in western Canada, at a time when they are in a crisis situation. They need some stability and some certainty from the government. What the government said before is not what it is doing now. In the promotional material that it sent across the country, it is very clear. I have a copy of one of these promotions right here. It states that the federal government will pay 25 per cent of the premiums.

• (1610)

The minister is simply playing political games. There is no assurance for the producers of the country that down the road the federal government will continue to pay 25 per cent. The motion moved by the member for Mackenzie would clarify that. It clearly states that it will be "an amount equal to 25 per cent of all premiums paid". That is very clear. It clarifies and makes certain the position that was put forth by the government earlier. To have this motion defeated will put the producers in a very risky situation. Who knows what will happen in the future?

If the government decides to reduce the premiums to 20 per cent or 15 per cent, who is going to pay the extra amount? It may well be the producers. In fact, until recently, the federal government was paying 50 per cent of the premiums. Now it is down to 25 per cent. The government said it was 25 per cent, but now this bill

### *Government Orders*

states "up to 25 per cent". It could be reduced below 25 per cent in the future. The government is doing nothing more than playing politics with the producers across the country. The minister and the government know that.

**An Hon. Member:** It is shameful.

**Mr. Laporte:** Yes, it is shameful.

The producers need some assurance. They need the assurance of the government that it is looking after their interests and the needs of agriculture.

The whole rural infrastructure of the country is in a very sorry state these days. The economic infrastructure in western Canada, which is agriculture, is in a very shaky situation. The infrastructure in Atlantic Canada, which is the fishing industry, is in a very shaky situation. What people need in western Canada is some assurances, commitment and leadership from the government. They are not getting it. They are getting games and double-talk from the government. This is not what the producers in western Canada deserve. Furthermore, when producers in western Canada are in difficulty, the whole infrastructure of western Canada is in difficulty too.

In the last few years in the province of Saskatchewan we have seen a falling out of the bottom of agriculture. As a result, we have 14 per cent of people in that province living below the poverty line. That is 14 per cent, which is the second highest number of people living below the poverty line of any province in the country. Only Newfoundland exceeds that. In addition to that, we have lost 28,000 people from the province last year, a direct loss of population. A lot of that can be attributed to the agriculture economy.

What people need in Saskatchewan and in western Canada is some commitment by the government that it is doing something to help the agricultural economy of western Canada. When the agricultural economy is in crisis, small businesses are in crisis. The general store owner in small towns is in difficulty. The people who sell fertilizer, gasoline, and fuel are in difficulty. The government has not provided the leadership that people in western Canada need. This is just one more example of double-talk and politics. There is one thing the government is very good at and that is playing politics and political strategy. It is not very good when it comes to