

destroy a community, and we destroy a way of life. Honourable senators, something needs to be done.

In 1980 there was a Conservative government in Manitoba, an NDP government in Saskatchewan, a Conservative government in Alberta, and a Liberal government in Ottawa. All of those governments acted collectively and something was done. Today, there is no collective action and there does not seem to be any prospect of any action being taken quickly. By the lack of action—

Senator Doody: Perhaps we should adjourn this debate and continue it next week so that we can obtain a reply for you.

Senator Argue: I do not care whether you adjourn the debate. It is up to you whether or not you do that. I do not think we should adjourn the debate.

However, honourable senators, that is the way things are, and instead of bragging about the nonsense that was put on the record yesterday as to what the government is doing, I think we should all be looking at this situation and doing something about it.

There was a drought in Western Canada in 1985, but it was not really a spring drought; it was a sort of summer and fall drought. The prospects in the spring were not too bad. Then the drought came on and farmers asked that action be taken, and some action was taken. My wife, Jean, organized a farm women's group and they took action. In fact, there was lots of grassroots action out in the west and, finally, a payment of \$50 per cow was paid, and that helped. Honourable senators, this is the kind of action that is required, and required now.

Honourable senators, let me read to you what the government's action is, because it was put on the record yesterday by Senator Murray:

Agriculture Canada, through the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration, has been monitoring drought conditions in Western Canada on an ongoing basis.

In other words, they have not been sleeping; they have been awake. That is good. Also, they have found out that it is not raining, so they are monitoring the situation. Isn't that great!

PFRA, which operates 86 community pastures,—

Some bureaucrat in Ottawa wrote this, I suppose.

—reports that forage growth has been slow—

Isn't that something? It is actually zero, but they say it has been slow.

—as a result of dry conditions and cool temperatures.

It would not matter if it were cold or hot; if it is dry, nothing will grow, and I suppose the temperature is not really much of a factor.

Grazing is not expected to be delayed longer than one to three weeks in most areas,—

Honourable senators, do they know when it is going to rain? Do they know that in two or three weeks the grass will be growing? Of course they do not know, and the grass will not be growing in that part of Western Canada unless it rains.

—although there are some pockets where it is more severe.

Such as the big pocket that is Alberta or the small pocket which is half of Saskatchewan. These, I suppose, are the "some pockets".

Hay and other feed supplies are still good—

Which is not true.

—and most producers are able to delay pasturing with no difficulty.

Senator Olson says that the cows are starving, but the official position of the Government of Canada and PFRA is that "most producers are able to delay pasturing with no difficulty."

Senator Murray then went on:

The first and most immediate concern for livestock is the lack of drinking water.

Et cetera, et cetera. Then he went on to say—and listen to this:

Through the Crop Insurance Program forage and livestock producers have the opportunity of purchasing financial protection against the possibility of reduced feed supplies.

Isn't that great?

In the event of a continued drought and crop insurance claim payments, farmers can use these funds to assist in defraying the cost of purchasing feed and/or moving feed and livestock.

In other words, honourable senators, wait until your crop ceases to exist; wait until crop insurance says that there is no crop; wait until you get a payment in October and then you can go and buy some feed. By that time the cows may all be dead, of course, because they will have starved to death; on the other hand, they may all have been sold. However, the official position of the Government of Canada—because that is what it says—is that if the drought continues, then:

... producers have the opportunity of purchasing financial protection against the possibility of reduced feed supplies. In the event of a continued drought and crop insurance claim payments, farmers can use these funds to assist in defraying the cost of purchasing feed and/or moving feed and livestock.

Honourable senators, the situation is very serious. Money and funds are required to take cattle to grazing at some distance away where that is the farmer's decision or the rancher's decision. Freight should be paid to move feed to the cattle. There should be a program maintaining the grain supplies that are in the elevators in local areas so that those grain stocks can be made available to livestock. I believe it is again time for the government to initiate a herd maintenance program.

● (1510)

Honourable senators, this is an emergency. Why is it not being looked into? Perhaps it is in the wrong region. Perhaps if we transferred the drought to Ontario we would hear a hell of a scream. We would see a much more powerful lobby than