

Established Programs Financing

I thought the Minister indicated that he was in favour of taking over more control of university curricula. I do not think that is what he meant at all, because the university has traditionally been a place in which the staff and students would have the intellectual freedom to decide these things.

As to soil salinity, we appreciate the fact that the Department of Agriculture has found certain remedies for the problems developing in Saskatchewan now. What I was trying to say in my remarks about the necessity of having universities involved in this kind of a problem, particularly in a prairie province such as where I live, is that the information be given out at that level to the community, the student body and those who are going to be living there. I appreciate that in the early days of farming in Saskatchewan people did not understand—and maybe they do not understand that well yet—the effects farming would have on the soil, the basic natural resource we live by. Farming of the last 60, 70 or 80 years, depending on the part of the province, has had results that I do not think anyone foresaw—that there would be a breakdown in our soil structure. I was just indicating that it would be very important that this kind of research, study and teaching be continued because it will have a very long and powerful effect on our future.

Mr. Blenkarn: Mr. Speaker, can the Hon. Member tell me how he believes the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) could conceivably think that the federal Government transfers about \$5 billion to education when the amount this fiscal year is \$1.952 billion and drops to \$1.917 billion next year? Is that because Members on this side do not get the message across to the Government, or is it because he does not believe the Minister of Agriculture understands the estimates and the transfers in the first place?

Mr. Ogle: Out of those two choices I think I would have to select the second. Again I go back to the point that many times I felt my friend, the Minister of Agriculture, was able to reel off figures and percentages without too many facts. I appreciate that and I accept that.

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, is the Hon. Member aware that if the scientific and technical knowledge we have was used in western Canada now, in two years they could increase grain production by 30 per cent?

Mr. Mayer: Not under this Government.

Mr. Althouse: Not without a little rain.

Mr. Ogle: I was just going to say that. The Minister indicates by that remark that we get rain in Saskatchewan every year. I still believe the major thing we count on in agriculture is that we get enough moisture. I am sure if he has been in the Prairies during a period of time when there is no rain—and I grew up there during a period of time in which there was no rain—there would be no crops. Neither his Department nor any other Department will produce crops or double production unless we have natural conditions, which he does not as yet have any control over, as far as I know.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The time for questions and comments has lapsed. Debate.

Mr. Whelan: I would enter debate, then. I will be very short in my debate.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the Minister rising to make a speech or not?

Mr. Whelan: A short one, yes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I will recognize the Hon. Minister of Agriculture for a speech in debate.

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I do not really want to take too much time of the House, but when the Hon. Member talks about dry weather, he should study the statistics again. We should all be aware of what scientists have been able to do. Even in a year with less rainfall than the worst drought year, our farmers were able to grow their crops because of the practices they used. I do not pretend to have any more wisdom or powers than the Hon. Member has, but I have powers in an amount equal to his. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I was about to call the Hon. Minister to order. We are now debating transfer payments to the provinces not the topic of agriculture. We are now open for questions and comments, I suppose. The length of a speech makes no difference; this is now a period for questions and comments.

Mr. Blenkarn: Mr. Speaker, I thought the Minister heard my comments earlier with respect to transfers. The Minister indicated that transfers for education were in the \$5 billion range. The fact is that this fiscal year the transfer will be \$1.952 billion, decreasing next year to \$1.917 billion. Can the Minister explain this loss of some \$35 million? Has it evaporated? Is it fresh air and sunshine that will help students and help finance education? Could the Minister of Agriculture tell us what kind of fertilizer he has been spreading, what he has to offer the students in the provinces, and how we are going to finance education, research and development in this country?

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member can use that figure if he wants; I may have been using the wrong year. But if he is going to tell me that is the least we ever paid, he is wrong.

Mr. Blenkarn: That is what you are paying.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, the Minister will be well aware of the difficulty many young people are having in their effort to get into the faculties of agriculture at various universities as a result of increasing tuition fees. I draw his attention to the fact that the University of British Columbia tuition fee is increasing this year by 33 per cent, and fees at universities in Saskatchewan are going up by 25 per cent.