

Supply—Agriculture

So much for the general problem of wheat and the position in which the prairie farmer generally finds himself in the economy at the present time. There is one subject matter that I should like to bring to the attention of the Minister of Agriculture—in fact there are two—and I shall do so briefly. The problem of flooding in Manitoba has been under continuous discussion in this house during the past three or four years. When the estimates of the department have been before us, whenever we reached the section dealing with the activities of P.F.R.A. we have had one or two casual questions concerning the progress of diking and flood control on the Assiniboine and Red rivers, and the minister has told us in casual terms that the work is proceeding according to plan.

Last spring, however, the problem of flooding reached unusually severe proportions and there were demands for immediate action from the farmers affected. They were so greatly disturbed that they organized a flood control association, which has been meeting regularly since then in order to bring this problem directly to the attention of the government. The hon. member for Portage-Neepawa made an effective presentation last year in regard to this question. He went back to his own constituency in order to review the situation for himself, and he came back thoroughly convinced that immediate action was required to deal with the situation. If the minister replies to the various questions that are thrown at him during this preliminary discussion on the first item of the estimates, I would appreciate it if he could inform us what action has been taken or what plans there are for the immediate future to deal more directly with this problem.

Then there is also the matter of assistance to the farmers who were affected by the flood last year and in the previous few years. Under the federal-provincial flood formula I understand that no consideration is to be given to the loss of livestock, grain or chattels. Under the assistance program I believe that only building damage is recoverable.

If that is the case it completely avoids the issue, because most of the farmers somewhere in their farm area have a relatively high level of ground, and they have seen to it that their buildings were placed on that high level. Almost without exception the flood damage did not cause any difficulties in connection with the houses, barns and other buildings. The damage arose largely because of inundated fields and inability to sow the crop last spring. There was also some injury to the farmers' livestock. Therefore if it is true that the

federal-provincial flood formula covers buildings only, it makes no contribution at all toward solving the problem of the financial loss suffered by the farmers in the recurring recent floods.

I understand also that the formula applies only to farmers who have been flooded by what are described as foreign waters such as the Assiniboine river, the Red river, the lakes of Manitoba and so forth. Again, much of our problem was caused from excessive rain damage. Of course if we were going to consider the difficulty in all its aspects, this would lead us to a consideration of the P.F.A.A. program. I believe there is in store for us at a later date some legislation with regard to P.F.A.A. I shall therefore leave any further remarks I have to make on that score until that legislation is before us.

There is one final item to which I wish to refer, and it is a recurring one. It is a problem that has been considered thoroughly by the committee on agriculture during the past two or three years. It is a problem that it seems we have not begun to solve even after all the careful deliberation which has taken place. In dealing with the question of the allocation of box cars the agriculture committee of last year came to this conclusion:

Your committee gave particular study to the difficulties of moving grain at this time of relative congestion and the inherent problem of the equitable distribution of box cars.

Your committee was seized with the present necessity of wheat board shipping orders having overriding priority. This committee recommends that the wheat board allocation of shipping orders be carried through, by the wheat board issuing instructions to the railways to spot box cars at elevators at each shipping point in proportion to the wheat board orders approved for that point.

At the time that seemed to be an adequate solution, but I have had more letters of protest than ever before on this box car problem. It would therefore seem that there is still something lacking. I know the question comes more directly under the Minister of Trade and Commerce but I trust the Minister of Agriculture, because of his professed interest in the welfare of the western grain producer, will use his influence in bringing about a more satisfactory solution to this difficulty.

Mr. Carter: I want to say how happy I am to learn that so many farmers are in a position where they can afford to pay income tax. My primary interest, of course, is fish because I am the representative of a constituency composed almost entirely of fishermen. I am looking forward to the day when the fishermen of Burin-Burgeon will also be in a position to pay income tax. I only want the farmers to be in a position to keep on paying