

Mr. GARDINER: I think the hon. member for Qu'Appelle will agree that the first trip around can only be an estimate; that is, if that trip is made in the early part of July. The heat wave which usually dries up our crops, if they are dried up, comes as a rule about the middle of July. While an estimate might be made fairly early in the month of July, it would be necessary, of course, to make another trip later and check that crop. I do not know of any other way of doing it. If it is not made at all, you may run into much more serious difficulties. You might have to make several inspections at a time when the crop is cut and has disappeared, and you would not have any idea, other than by seeing the stubble, what crop there was on the land. Of course we could check threshing returns, but sometimes that is difficult in that period of the year.

Mr. ROSS (Souris): Following the hon. member for Qu'Appelle, I am pleased that municipal organizations are going to be used to the extent proposed. I assumed that they would be used in the past in connection with the Prairie Farm Assistance Act. The minister says they will not be used for inspections. Does he intend to have the acreages all through the territory inspected, in order to check up the amount in summer-fallow, coarse grains, and so on? If so, it will certainly add considerably to the number of inspectors.

Mr. GARDINER: I do not anticipate that it will be necessary to do that in all cases. I believe that the hon. member for Souris, who himself has been president of that organization, will agree with me when I say that there are many secretaries all over Manitoba—and in Saskatchewan a similar condition exists—who know pretty well the persons who are making those returns; they have had experiences with them over a long term of years. I do not believe there will be much difficulty in getting information with regard to probably ninety per cent of the people who can be absolutely relied upon, and the statement of the secretary-treasurer will be sufficient to indicate that it can be relied on. Where that is the case, I do not believe that it will be necessary to make very many inspections; it may be advisable to make some checks in order to take in a certain number, without making any selection of people, and going through them to find how closely correct they are. In some instances, where it is indicated to us that a check should be made, a thorough check will probably have to be made.

Mr. QUELCH: One rather important point is this. I believe the minister will agree that very few of the acreages which have been

put in last year or the year before are really accurate. I do not suggest that wrong estimates are intentionally given, but on many farms the fields are of an irregular shape, or contain sloughs, and the acreage is merely roughly guessed. The point is this: if in the future farmers are required to give the acreage accurately, they will have to measure those fields, tape them, and it will be found that on a 100-acre field they will be 10 acres out one way or the other. Are you going to agree that the acreage measure shall be recognized as correct even if it gives them a larger amount than in the past? If you say in one case that the acreage has been too large, that they must cut it down, you will have to give the farmer the benefit where the case is reversed. Is it intended, therefore, to accept the acreage given in the past, or the acreage as shown by tape measure put over the wheat stubble at the present time?

Mr. GARDINER: I would not expect that very many farmers would go to the trouble of taking a tape line and measuring the land. We know that the practice most of us follow is to take a seed drill which has a tally on it—

Mr. QUELCH: Probably inaccurate.

Mr. GARDINER: —and we keep our records very well from our tally on the seed drill. It is true that all of them do not tally correctly, but they are about as correct as the figures one would get if he were to measure these zigzag fields with a tape line. I have gone over a great number of these prairie farm assistance returns, have taken some of them to schoolhouses in the west and discussed them with the farmers themselves. Some have been astonished to find how far they have varied their returns, not with any wrong intent, for often they vary them to their own disadvantage. I can quite understand that it is easy for farmers who do not keep books or records of what goes on from year to year to forget to the extent of five acres how much wheat they had last year. But I have found that probably ninety-nine per cent of them, under our experience with the Prairie Farm Assistance Act, have demonstrated to us that they tried to be right, and when they are trying to be right they are not going to beat us very much; they usually beat themselves. They are really trying in earnest to be right. I think that will be found to be the situation under this plan. If they do vary the figures at all, it will be to make it absolutely certain that, when they have sworn to the statement, they have sworn to something which is correct. I do not think we shall have much difficulty with them.