

**An hon. Member:** If they are casual employees they must be going like hell.

**Mr. Hamilton (Swift Current-Maple Creek):** As far as I can make out, in the last two years the staff in Regina have been working in a make-believe world where the best of government public servants have nothing but despair. They have made plans, have had them signed, but then one of the minister's cronies thinks the plans may damage his standing, he buttonholes the minister and the plans have been scratched. And so another political debt is paid.

These Liberal party hacks and defeated candidates are becoming unique. They are becoming as important as they think they are. They can offer to open political doors, threaten public servants, and there seems to be nothing that can be done. This is nothing but a collection of Neros in the guise of public servants and assorted experts who do nothing but fiddle, scratch and jawbone away the time. I would like to know what these people are doing.

No attempt was made to modernize this act over the years. One of the criticisms was that the act could not be operated on an individual basis because it came under provincial jurisdiction and this would put it into the federal sphere.

The figures I look at show that we have between \$9 million and \$10 million left in the fund. I suggest this money should be transferred to the Canadian Wheat Board Pool account for disbursement, with the final payments to offset some of the approximately \$30 million demurrage charges which accrued as a result of the west coast strike.

Any institutional setup develops interests of its own, but in its death throes the PFAA group has been solely concerned with its own status, its own funds, and jockeying for position. I raised the case of my constituent who was hauled before the commission to compare his situation with the present one. Certainly I think the present setup of PFAA is a perfect model of that mean little description of politics: who gets what, when and how? As I said before, the only way we can be satisfied is by having a full-scale public investigation into this matter, and I hope the minister will see fit to initiate one.

**Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming):** Mr. Speaker, I have been interested for sometime in prairie farm assistance administration, but I was never more interested than I was when the Minister of Justice decided to eliminate the operation of this program, supposedly on behalf of western farmers.

I have listened with interest for the last hour, and I have read the report of the commission of inquiry into the Prairie Farm Assistance administration held in June 1964. Apparently there were two points of view in respect of this legislation. The first was that it had a great deal to do in the playing of politics. It is also interesting to note some of the results of that inquiry.

The remarks of some of the knowledgeable members from western Canada have been of interest to me. It was indicated again that the Prairie Farm Assistance Act has become a political football. I have been around here long enough to remember the antics of Jimmy Gardiner, a former minister of agriculture. It was once said that he

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came the closest to setting up an operation like the political Tammany Hall operation in the United States. That is probably true. That reputation will have difficulty in surviving if we continue to allow the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lang) to play around with agriculture in western Canada.

What has been done by the Minister of Justice in agriculture has certainly not been in the interests of a well organized change in farming legislation for western Canada. Some of the things he has done have had an adverse effect on the whole operation.

**Mr. Horner:** And they have not been compatible with justice.

**Mr. Peters:** Of course they have not been compatible with justice. Any school that would have this particular minister as an instructor of any sort must be the most ignorant school in Canada. Not a day goes by when I do not hear some misjustice that is taking place in the whole field of western agriculture.

We are now faced with the disposal of some \$8 million left in this fund. This legislation has been in effect for many years and has done a great deal to help farmers in western Canada. I was interested to hear the hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin) point out how very small amounts of money given under this act had helped so many farmers in western Canada survive. He pointed out that amounts such as \$400 or \$500 helped to maintain the very economy of farmers in western Canada.

We should be putting the money that remains in this fund into a fund that will continue to be of assistance to farmers in western Canada. This money has been collected from the farmers in those areas where grain was the main crop, and many of those areas have been high risk areas over the years. I am sure there will be emergencies in the future, many of which could be met through this fund. If the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) would quit playing games with the Minister of Justice and administer this act as it should be administered, I am sure such an emergency fund could be set up so that whatever money is left could continue to be used to the benefit of those people who contributed originally to the fund.

Such a fund could be attached to the crop insurance program, or used as a separate fund for emergencies in western farm areas. The minister would get full credit for such a move, and would not be associated with the sole purpose the Minister of Justice has been trying to achieve for the past four or five years.

The last annual report I have indicates that no money was collected under this legislation for the 1972-73 crop year. It is interesting to note in that annual report that there were payments made in respect of the 1972-73 crop year. In Manitoba 910 awards were made amounting to \$184,000; in Saskatchewan 5,223 awards were made amounting to \$1,423,094; in Alberta 7,456 awards were paid, amounting to \$2,150,755, and in British Columbia 668 awards were made amounting to \$258,606, for a total of 14,257 awards.