

measure that is correct. But in respect of a problem of this magnitude I say we cannot rest on our oars by taking any such attitude. The problem of the conservation and development of the natural resources of the nation is a major responsibility of the central government as well as of the provinces.

Canada has been profligate in respect of her resources, with the result that in many instances our forests have been overcut. Our soils have been wasted—not only on the plains of western Canada but on the slopes throughout the east. Our streams have become sedimented and the flow of our rivers altered to the point where in the spring we suffer from floods in the same areas where in midsummer the rivers are dry or relatively so.

The dominion government has not been without plans in respect of this particular kind of problem. Its plans were set out in the proposals of the dominion as they were presented to the dominion-provincial conference in August 1945. They looked toward meeting conditions such as these which this year have caused so much waste and damage throughout the nation.

At pages 24 and 25 of this document the approach of the dominion government is indicated as follows:

Activities for which the provincial governments are responsible, and which the dominion is prepared to consider assisting, provided specific agreement can be reached—

And it goes on in these words:

Assistance to raise provincial standards, in the general national interest, in respect to the conservation, protection and development of provincial natural resources.

And then, under the heading "Agriculture"—

Extension of conservation activities to all provinces. For example, water conservation, land drainage, marsh lands rehabilitation, land clearing, soil erosion control.

Here we have a problem right on our doorstep. The need of action is emphasized by the tremendous loss we see on all sides. In this outline by the government there is an indication that it has given some thought to the matter. But nothing is being done—for the reason, I take it, that the dominion and the provinces have not been called together to discuss this very kind of thing.

What I wish to do today is to point out the problem, and to indicate that in large measure it is the responsibility of the central government—a matter to which it has already given some thought, but about which nothing is being done because the dominion and the provinces have not been called together. With

[Mr. Bracken.]

all respect I suggest this is an added argument for their being called at once to meet in another conference.

The second question I wish to raise has to do with agricultural subsidies, or a certain phase of that subject. On March 17 last the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner) announced a policy of feed grain drawbacks amounting to 25 cents a bushel on barley and 10 cents on oats. This announcement was made while parliament was in session, and it is reported in detail at page 1408 of *Hansard*. At the moment I shall not take time to read it, but I have no doubt hon. members will recall the announcement made on that occasion. The effect of that policy was to reduce the cost of feed grain to certain users of those products. Two weeks later, on April 2, when the house was not in session, a report appeared in the press indicating that another statement had been made by the minister.

Mr. GARDINER: The same statement.

Mr. BRACKEN: I shall read from the *Free Press* of April 2, which contains a report of a speech made by the Minister of Agriculture at a banquet held in the Prince Edward hotel at Brandon, Manitoba. The report states:

He also announced that the refund of 25 cents per bushel on barley and 10 cents on oats offered to purchasers of feed grain for live stock will be discontinued on August 1, 1947.

On March 17 it was announced that the subsidy would be continued; and then, according to this report, on April 2 it was announced it would be taken off on August 1. I believe the house is entitled to know what the situation is, so that there may be no confusion or misunderstanding. We should be told whether this second statement is a statement of government policy; and if so, whether the minister or someone else in the government will elaborate upon it. A bald statement of that kind, with no announcement of modified policy in related matters, leads to misunderstanding and confusion in the minds of those who are directly interested in such change of policy.

For example, when the policy was announced on March 17 there can be no doubt that feeders throughout the country planned their work having in mind that the policy first announced would be carried out. Two weeks later they read in the press—whether it is correct or not—that on August 1 the policy is to be discontinued. If it is not continued it will mean that those who are in or are going into that business—the feeding business—will at that time find their costs of production increased, with the result that either the prices