

contemplate seriously adding more taxation to the people under a condition like that is simply to contemplate something which borders on lunacy. I repeat that I oppose the principle of the technique, namely, the taxation by which it is apparently proposed to attain the objectives of this bill.

Mr. CLEAVER: Mr. Speaker, I rise to a question of privilege. When taking part in the debate the hon. member for Huron North (Mr. Cardiff) threw out the implication that I as the member for Halton had been neglecting the farmers in my riding, and he made the statement that I had made the speech which I made to-day only because we are on the eve of an election. I should like to remind the hon. member and the house that I came here as a new member in 1936 and I made my maiden speech within one month of the convening of the house. At that time I supported agriculture when I spoke on the Canadian-United States trade agreement. From 1937 down to the outbreak of the war, whenever I felt that I could make a constructive suggestion in regard to legislation being dealt with by the house with regard to agriculture, I spoke upon the matter. It is quite true that since the outbreak of war the few speeches I have made have been in regard to the war effort.

If my hon. friend was referring to the fact that I have not participated in the general free-for-all discussion which takes place yearly on the agricultural estimates he is 100 per cent correct, because I have always felt that I could make a more effective contribution to the welfare of the farmers in my riding with respect to departmental matters by making my representations direct to the heads of the different departments rather than by taking up the time of the house. I have consistently followed that practice, I think with only one exception when I made a short speech a year ago in support of an increased grant for research and experimental work.

I considered that I was quite within my rights in rising to-day to present some views which I thought would be helpful to the house and by passing on to the membership of this house the views of the farmers of my riding with respect to the important piece of legislation we are now considering. I ask my hon. friend: Could I have made the speech any sooner than I did? I feel that I was quite within my rights, that I had a right to make that speech without having any slurs cast upon me for making it. I say to my hon. friend that the statement he made that my speech was made only because we are on the eve of an election is untrue.

Mr. ROSS (St. Paul's): In answer to my hon. friend on the other side I may say that unfortunately the hon. member he is criticizing is not in the house at the present time because he had to attend an important meeting. I must say this on the question of privilege. It is difficult, Mr. Speaker, to understand the hon. gentleman because nearly every time he speaks in the house he makes a political speech.

Hon. J. G. GARDINER (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I had not intended to speak again on the second reading, but a number of questions have been put to me to which I assume the members expect answers before the bill goes to the committee. Most of the questions I think can best be answered when we are dealing with the different sections of the bill in committee, but there were one or two general matters raised to which I think I should make reply at this stage.

In the first place I wish to deal with the statements which were made by the hon. member for Lake Centre (Mr. Diefenbaker) toward the end of his remarks when he referred to a statement which I had made in the city of Regina in the latter part of 1943. It is obvious to anyone who considers that statement that it could be made only with reference to the statistics as they existed at that time, and it is equally obvious that a speech delivered in 1943 could not be based on the final statistics for the year 1943 because they were not issued in final form until after the end of the year.

I have in my hand the revised figures of the dominion bureau of statistics, as of February 22, 1944, giving the final figures for 1943. The statement which I made at the wheat pool meeting in the city of Regina, and a newspaper report of which was read by the hon. member for Lake Centre, referred, as I said across the floor of the house a few minutes ago, to the figures for 1942. The index figure for Saskatchewan at that time was 67. Those figures have been revised up to a later date, and the latest figures that I have in my hand show that the Saskatchewan figure is 69.2 for 1942, which is two points higher than the figure which was contained in the statistics that I had in my hand at the time I was speaking in Regina. In addition, there is paid in western Canada the wheat acreage payment, and this payment at that time increased the returns to the farmers of Saskatchewan to an index figure of 80. I assume that since the basic figure of 67 has since been raised by two points, the new figure will now be 82. But the most important part of my statement made in Regina was that