

Supply—Agriculture

have a very large family to find that it would not go even as far as that. I wonder how the minister thinks a farmer can obtain money with which to meet his other expenses if the payments under the act are sufficient only to meet his grocery bill.

Mr. Gardiner: I said store bills.

Mr. Argue: For groceries and clothing. That is in keeping with some of the advertisements put out by the Liberal party during the election campaign, which said that the amount was sufficient for the grocery bill and the clothing bill, and to some extent would pay the other farm expenses.

Mr. Ferrie: Why does not the hon. member keep within the bounds of truth?

Mr. Argue: I would ask the hon. member to withdraw that remark.

Mr. Ferrie: I do not have to withdraw that. The hon. gentleman made a statement.

Some hon. Members: Order.

The Deputy Chairman: The hon. member for Assiniboia has requested the hon. member for Mackenzie to withdraw a certain remark he has just made. I am sure the hon. member for Mackenzie does not want to offend the hon. member for Assiniboia in any way and therefore I think the hon. member for Mackenzie is ready to reconsider the remark he has made.

An hon. Member: We hope.

Mr. Ferrie: Mr. Chairman, do I have to withdraw that remark if I can prove that the hon. member is wrong?

Mr. Argue: I have asked the hon. member to withdraw his remark, but apparently he does not think he should. I realize he is a new member. I know something of the reputation he has earned for himself in certain parts of the country, and, knowing that, I shall not press the matter any further. I just want to say—

Mr. Ferrie: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Argue: I have the floor.

The Deputy Chairman: I would add to the remark I have made by saying that I do not think the hon. member for Mackenzie intended to impute any motive to the hon. member for Assiniboia. He merely questioned the accuracy of the statement made by the hon. member for Assiniboia. At a later stage the hon. member for Mackenzie will perhaps seek to prove his assertion.

Mr. Argue: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am sure if I have made an incorrect statement about Liberal advertising the minister will correct me, and I shall be willing to

stand corrected. I was saying that the present payments under the Prairie Farm Assistance Act, agreeing with the minister, are certainly no more than enough to pay the farmer's store bill. The farmer's store bill is only a very small part of the expenses he must incur in farming each year. He must pay his taxes. If he has a complete crop failure he must buy seed. He must buy fuel, and pay for repairs. He must carry on all his farming operations for at least another twelve months, and certainly \$200, \$300, \$400, or a maximum of \$500, as the case may be, is not nearly sufficient for the farmer to do that.

I am glad to learn that amendments to the act are being brought in at this session. I understood from the minister this afternoon that the basis for payment, the township, would be reduced. I welcome that announcement, but certainly even that change is not nearly sufficient. This group would like to see the payments made on a more equitable basis. We would like to see them paid on an individual basis. I should also like to see the residence qualifications, if I may term them that, changed to some extent. At present to obtain payment a farmer must reside on his farm from the first of May until the first of November. A number of my friends and neighbours had crop failures this year. Some of them had very small farms, and some quite large farms. They did not want to stay at home on the farms all winter with very little income, so they have moved to the cities to obtain employment. A number of them feel that unless there is an increase in the amount of precipitation before next spring they are not going to return to the farms. If they do not go back to the farms, then they cannot qualify for payments under the Prairie Farm Assistance Act. I think it is certainly not a wise thing to ask a farmer to remain on his farm two or three months after his crop is lost and twiddle his thumbs merely to obtain the bonus.

As I said before, we would like to see the money paid under the Prairie Farm Assistance Act greatly increased. I think the maximum payment of \$2.50 an acre is far too small and should be increased to at least \$6 an acre. If it were increased to \$6 an acre that would be somewhat less than the selling price of four bushels of wheat per acre. Surely no one would suggest that farmers would stay on their land merely to obtain the bonus even if that bonus were increased to the sum of \$6 per acre.

It has been stated that economic conditions in western Canada are pretty good. It is true that the prices of non-farm products are reasonably satisfactory, but it must be borne in mind that the farmer's costs are also high. We should keep in mind that, with the