

*Dominion-Provincial Relations*

Let us examine for a few moments what the province of Alberta wanted to do. They designated two areas, one in the Peace River district and one in west central Alberta, as being areas in which there had been a long period of severe crop losses. The province of Alberta went into these areas and made a survey. To make a long story short, they decided to make some payments out of the provincial treasury for the purpose of keeping these farm units from collapsing. What could possibly be a more effective program in a war on poverty than to move in and keep these farm units from collapsing so that the farmers would not be turned off their units, find their way into an unemployed area and go on relief and so on?

If the federal government had come along and co-operated with the province, the problem of these crop losses could have been dealt with. These crop losses are not going to carry on forever. This is an unusual thing in this part of the country; it is not a long, continuing situation. What is more, Mr. Speaker, the province of Alberta made this very clear to the federal government.

Therefore I think we need the kind of white paper that is called for in this motion so that the provinces, and I mean all the provinces, will know what the federal government intends to do when the provinces are faced with these kind of situations. Surely we do not have to face each one of these problems and programs individually. I know this government does not like the phrase "guidelines" because of the connotation that has been attached to these two words, but I believe that if a white paper as called for by the hon. member for Peace River were prepared we would be able to arrive at some guidelines so the provinces would at least have some idea of how far the federal government would go in participating in programs to deal with these severe areas of depression and what could almost be called disaster.

What makes this situation even worse is that on many occasions during 1965 and 1964—I do not have all the quotations before me but this happened on many occasions—when a member rose in this house and asked the federal government to do something by way of assistance in areas that had suffered a tragedy or disaster for one reason or another, the standard answer was, "If the province requests assistance and is willing to pay 50 per cent, we will co-operate". That is

[Mr. Olson.]

exactly what the government of the province of Alberta did. They set up the program and asked the federal government to pay 50 per cent of the cost. They said the province was willing to pay the other 50 per cent. As I said, Mr. Speaker, they have been turned down.

This is not good enough. We need these guidelines and we need, as the hon. member for Peace River said, some kind of paper outlining with clarity and in succinct terms what is going to be the position and the policy of the federal government in matters dealing with the war on poverty, including assistance programs. I should like to impress upon the members of the government that this kind of program will not go on and on. As a matter of fact, I do not think the government of the province of Alberta would set up such a program and ask the federal government to participate if it was not what they considered to be the best kind of program to meet the situation. This area is not known for a long series of crop failures such as have occurred during the last two or three years. It is one which has a reasonably good chance of getting a crop year after year. What is more, Mr. Speaker, if we can save these farms from complete financial breakdown they will probably be able to carry themselves for the next X number of years, whether it be 10 or 20, without further assistance.

I think this is the most effective kind of program that can be used in this so-called war on poverty. Suppose the province had not moved in and these people had gotten into so much financial difficulty that they had to leave their farms? Where would they have gone and what would be the expense to the provincial and federal governments? I suggest this expense would be far greater than the few dollars the province is now seeking in order to get these people over this difficult period.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I wish to say again that the time for a statement of policy in the form of a white paper is long overdue. We certainly hope that when the government comes along with it, it will not be substantially different for any one province than for another. The people and government of Alberta feel there has been something of a double standard up to now. All we ask is that the province of Alberta be treated in the same way as any other province of Canada