

Prairie Farm Assistance Act

making efforts all the time to enable them to move from that land to some other location. Once we take people off that land and put them on other land, the land from which they are removed never comes back under the act, no matter who has it. It is not intended to.

We are not dealing with such lands at all under the bill. The only thing the bill is intended to deal with is lands that were not under cultivation at all when the *Prairie Farm Assistance Act* was put on the statute book. By the terms of the amendment made by the standing committee on agriculture and colonization we put the date not at the time when the act came into effect, but at the 31st of December, 1940, at the end of the first year of its operations. That gave people in that section of the country an opportunity to observe the operation of the legislation before doing whatever they did do. What we say in the bill is that any lands that were not under private ownership at 31st December, 1940, are not to come under the act when they have been taken over from the government by some private person or organization. Lands that were still held by governments on the 31st day of December, 1940, do not come under the act as amended.

The intention is that any lands still owned by the government after some forty or fifty years of homesteading, and almost as many years when the lands were open for purchase and nobody thought they were sufficiently good either to be homesteaded or purchased during that period of time, are not good enough to be brought under this legislation after it is passed. That is the only principle underlying the bill.

I still say that we should not assume in our discussions that when we finish dealing with the bill, all submarginal land is going to be excluded from the provisions of the legislation. I would say at least fifty per cent of the land still under the act is submarginal, and that provincial governments, individuals and the federal government are doing the best they can to get as large a percentage of that land as possible out of the present form of cultivation altogether and put to some other use. The particular uses we are trying to bring about are to get such land under irrigation or under pasture. Those are the two things we are trying to do with it. Even at the present time these lands are rated as submarginal by people who know land. They go out and look at them and say: "I do not want that land; it is submarginal." The act now provides that if a government body says the lands are submarginal, they do not come under the act, no matter who is on them.

I want to make it perfectly plain that the bill does not deal with submarginal lands as such. It deals with lands which up to a

[Mr. Gardiner.]

certain date everybody considered were not good enough either to homestead or to buy. It is true that having set the date at December 31, 1940, there will be a few pieces of land in Saskatchewan particularly that were homesteaded after that date, and there will be a few parcels that were purchased after that date but they are largely in areas where the act would not apply in any case.

Mr. Coldwell: Of course there are lands held by the provincial government which have not been cultivated because they were not thrown open for homesteading or for sale, and yet they are good lands. I am thinking particularly of an area in my own constituency, on the Matador ranch, where there is some very heavy land which was not cultivated until quite recently. The point I am raising concerns land that is bought and broken; then the following spring the weather is dry, and although the land is prepared for seeding the people do not seed it because they believe the weather is too dry. Does land of that kind come under the legislation? It is cultivated land. It is not summer fallow. It was broken and prepared for seeding but not seeded on account of the unusually dry weather.

Mr. Gardiner: Any properly cultivated land is defined under the terms of the act as summer fallow if it was not seeded.

Mr. Coldwell: That might be the difficulty under the act. You say summer fallow?

Mr. Gardiner: Yes. If it meets the other conditions of the act, that would not prevent it from coming in.

Mr. Argue: I know the minister was correct when he said a few moments ago that the purpose of the amendment is not to remove submarginal land from the benefits of the act. Instead of what the minister is doing, and even with the changes that he proposes to make in the original bill, I believe he should give consideration to taking away the benefits of the act from submarginal land, and then doing something else to provide a livelihood for the people affected. When the legislation was first introduced it discriminated against all lands, with few exceptions, leased by the crown. Since that time the minister has proposed further amendments which will increase the exemptions of provincial crown land and therefore allow a greater amount of provincial crown land to remain under the act. But he has discriminated against all land sold by the crown, whether by a province or by a municipality, since December 31, 1940.

I might make the same point now that I made in the agriculture committee, that it is not fair to make this legislation retroactive