

Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act

years. Is any report available as to what they have accomplished in connection with that survey?

Mr. Gardiner: There are reports, but projects of that kind are in the class I spoke of a few moments ago, that is, they are outside what is generally known as the P.F.R.A. area, and are made as the result of requests from the province, as a rule, or some city or village or municipality. This department or the government would not necessarily be bound by any reports made in connection with them. We read the reports, of course; but only portions of the investigational work on that northern project which has been referred to have been completed and referred to us, and I do not think they could be properly discussed under this legislation.

Mr. Wright: They are being paid out of these moneys, and I think the engineers are under P.F.R.A. I should think their reports ought to be available to members of the house when they are made. Many of us are interested in this survey, and certainly I would appreciate it if the minister could see that as these reports are made they become available to members of the house.

Mr. Gardiner: I might point out that we accepted a suggestion from the opposition yesterday or the day before that a committee should be set up to redraft the rules of the house in order to save time. The rules of the house, and those of other bodies that I have read, are drafted with the idea of avoiding duplication of discussion—that is, having discussion overlap and run from one thing to another. The proper place to discuss the expenditures being made on the project concerned is the item in the estimates, which still has to be considered. This is not the proper place. When the item in my estimates comes up, all the facts will be available.

Mr. Argue: I want to say a few words directly on the latter part of this resolution, which reads:

—and to provide further that no projects involving an expenditure in excess of ten thousand dollars shall be undertaken without the consent of the governor in council.

If I correctly understood the minister's explanation, the limit now is \$5,000. The Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act has been very valuable in that it has provided for the construction of dugouts, small and large pasture projects, stock watering dams, and so on; and I would imagine that projects under \$10,000 might account for most of the vote under that act. Would the minister say what proportion of the expenditures under this act is used for those very valuable small projects, which can be allocated and gone ahead with under this provision?

[Mr. Wright.]

Just on that point, I note that the expenditures for prairie farm rehabilitation this year are down from \$3,750,000 to \$3 million. Since I believe these small projects are most valuable, I view with some concern a reduction of \$750,000 in the amount provided under this act, most of which, I presume, will be devoted to these smaller projects. I would ask the minister to tell the committee what proportion of the money expended under this act goes for projects costing less than \$10,000, and how many projects and what projects he expects to go ahead with this year. I would also ask what moneys are now being paid to the farmers for the construction of small dugouts. I believe the ceiling used to be \$125. What is the amount of money that the farmer can receive for the construction of a small dugout? I hope that amount can be increased.

Mr. Gardiner: I am afraid, Mr. Chairman, that we are getting off into the same thing again. All of these facts come before us when we are discussing our estimates, and they will all be here. The point which is involved in this particular item is one which I am sure the hon. member for Assiniboia will agree is absolutely essential to the carrying on of the act as it is now drafted. Without going into the question of detail with regard to the proportionate amounts, when you look at the divisions in the estimates themselves it will be noted that while the small projects that are referred to, such as dugouts and so on, run into the thousands, the amount of money which is expended on them is the smaller part of the expenditure. From that fact some people argue that all the money should be spent on that kind of thing because it does more good to more people. But the objective of this provision is to make it possible to get on with the work.

The cost of doing a small job—such as the putting in of a small dam or the putting in of pastures—is almost double what it was in 1935. If you start to hold up projects costing between \$5,000 and \$10,000 until a council meeting is held, and the matter is passed by treasury board and by council, at least two or three weeks would elapse, or maybe a month; and on occasion two or three months might go by before you could get the matter considered. On matters of that kind the minister must have the right to pass upon the question within some amount, and the amount in the past in all of the departments has been \$5,000. The amount is being raised from \$5,000 to \$10,000 in all similar departments. Because of the reason it is being raised in other departments, it is considered just as essential that it be raised in this one. The benefits flowing from this provision are going to accrue from