

*Supply—Agriculture*

average, the yield in that township is five bushels, or the equivalent of \$10. But only too often there is no yield whatsoever in the township, and consequently no revenue.

I would suggest to the government, therefore, that they give consideration to this, so that it may give some benefit and some relief. This will not be a gift, because I know it will be repaid a hundredfold. These thoughts, Mr. Chairman, I humbly offer for your consideration.

**Mr. Argue:** In rising to speak this evening I wish to express my pleasure in seeing the Minister of Agriculture once again restored to health. So far as we could tell this afternoon, he had never been ill at all. Apparently, however, our impression would be wrong, because I noticed in the press that shortly after the election he had gone for a ride in the Saskatchewan air ambulance plane. I am sure it speaks well for that service when a man of the standing of the Minister of Agriculture is prepared to take a chance in what many people call a C.C.F. plane.

I can agree with much of what has been said by the hon. member for Maple Creek. It is true that conditions of farming in that area are very risky. Crop failures occur frequently. However, it is still an area which can be a permanent agricultural area, and it could give a satisfactory standard of living to the people who reside in that country if certain agricultural policies were followed by the government.

I believe one of the most important problems with which we should deal at the present time is that of soil conservation and land utilization. I am glad to see that some steps are to be taken to protect our forests.

I should like also to see legislation advanced to protect land under cultivation. Dr. J. J. Booth of the Department of Agriculture, writing in a booklet called "Summary of report of special committee on land use", had this to say in respect to land in the eastern provinces:

In reviewing the past, an examination of census statistics in the use of land in the older provinces reveals that four million acres, at one time classified as improved land, have been lost. These census figures do not take into account abandoned farms, and an additional area, which might well total several million acres, has been lost through complete farm abandonment.

It is thought that of major and primary concern is that conservation policies should aim at protecting the productivity of land in active use and increasing its efficiency.

There is land which, because of topography and nearness to water, could best be used under irrigation; but irrigating two or three million acres more land in western Canada than is irrigated today is solving only

[Mr. Studer.]

one problem of land utilization. It will not stand us in very good stead if we merely increase our irrigated acreage considerably and then lose from production, by bad cultural practices, much of the land that we are now farming.

I suggest that the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act should be extended. More money should be made available for the taking of certain land out of the production of wheat and putting it back into grass. Money should be available to farmers in certain areas who are to contour farm and regrass slopes that have been badly eroded. Money should be used to buy farms from some farmers whose unit is uneconomic. The policy in the past has been to fence in a large acreage as a community pasture and then try to obtain some suitable farm land to be exchanged for the land being put into community pasture. Sufficient money should be made available to purchase outright from farmers the land placed in community pastures. With the help of money received from the sale of sub-marginal or inferior land a farmer could buy better land and be able in the future to look after himself and his family more in keeping with an adequate Canadian standard of living.

At the present time the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act pays a farmer \$125 for the construction of a dugout but in our particular district the farmer himself must pay the contractor \$300. If the farmer has a crop failure during a dry year, and often that is the only time he can construct a dugout, he may find that he has not the additional \$175 needed to pay for the dugout. I suggest to the minister that this allowance should be greatly increased, at least doubled, so that the farmers can afford to build dugouts and conserve the spring runoff.

I was interested to hear the Minister of Agriculture say this afternoon that the main reason the government had not undertaken a crop insurance scheme was that the federal government did not have sufficient constitutional power. I do agree however that an insurance scheme against crop failure, as we understand ordinary insurance schemes, is not practical for western Canada, at least for many parts, since in a high risk area premiums would be entirely too high. But I do not think the minister should use the constitutional argument as an excuse for not expanding and improving the Prairie Farm Assistance Act.

I was interested to hear the minister state that the payments under the Prairie Farm Assistance Act were probably just about enough to cover a farmer's grocery bill for the past summer. A farmer would not need to