

Unemployment Relief

quantum of individual relief, the reason being that the quantum of relief is within the sole determination of the province. If they decide to increase that quantum, then under our arrangement we have to meet the province dollar for dollar, but we cannot ourselves step in and fix the quantum of relief.

Mr. MacINNIS: I think the minister misunderstood my question. I was speaking not of the individual amount of relief given to recipients but of the increased burden on the provinces because of the rise there has been in the cost of living.

Mr. McLARTY: I do not think any province has suggested an increase over the 40-40-20 arrangement that was entered into last year. Speaking purely from recollection, my answer would be that there has been no representation made by any province that the dominion should absorb a larger proportion of the total relief.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: During the past several weeks various relief recipients in Saskatchewan have received notice that the amount of their relief is to be considerably reduced. But if I understood the minister correctly he stated the other evening that no notice had been given by this government to the provincial governments of any anticipated reduction this year in the amount of relief that would account for the notices being sent out by the provincial administrators of relief.

Mr. McLARTY: I do not want to interrupt my hon. friend, but he will remember that in the notice sent out to the provinces was the suggestion that in view of the vast war expenditure some maximum might have to be applied. I added that the intention was to apply that maximum in those provinces in which war orders are to a great degree resulting in a reduction in the amount of relief required, and suggested that I did not think Saskatchewan was in that class.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: I appreciate that, Mr. Chairman. Let me say that the questions I am asking are in no way to be considered as criticism. I believe too many hon. members from some parts of Canada are prone, particularly in view of the increased expenditures now requisite for war and war preparations, to complain of the inadequacy of the amount of relief which is being received. Coming as I do from Saskatchewan, I do not want the committee to suppose that we in that province do not appreciate the bountiful manner in which the successive governments of Canada have made expenditures in that province in order to relieve destitution. It is not in a critical spirit that I speak to-day.

[Mr. McLarty.]

We in Saskatchewan realize that, while we have passed through conditions the like of which, I believe, no other province of Canada has encountered, had it not been for the kindly attitude of hon. members representing other provinces, the position of Saskatchewan to-day would be worse than it is.

According to the estimates there is an anticipated reduction this year in respect of relief of some \$12,180,000. What are the anticipated allotments by provinces based on the estimated expenditure of some \$24,000,000 for relief? How much does the minister anticipate will be spent in the three prairie provinces during the current fiscal year?

Mr. McLARTY: I do not wish to withhold from the committee any information that I have, but this bill has not yet been passed; as soon as it is passed, estimates will be received from the various provinces as to their requirements. I suggest that the hon. member's question would be more appropriately asked upon the estimates. I cannot answer his question at the present time, much as I should like to do so.

The CHAIRMAN: Although there is a certain connection between section 3, which is now under consideration, and the question which was asked by the hon. member, I do not believe that, in view of the fact that the estimates are to be studied, it would be quite in order to discuss the amount to which he has referred, namely the estimate of \$24,000,000 for relief, because this will come up in due course when the estimates are before the committee.

Mr. McLARTY: I did not mean to take advantage of any rule of order. I merely suggested to the hon. member that I thought, if he could defer his question until the estimates come up, I would be able to give him an answer, which I am unable to do to-day.

The CHAIRMAN: I wanted simply to point out to the members of the committee that it is undesirable to go at too great length into items of the estimates, although some latitude is quite in order, as has been recognized heretofore.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: Without reference, then, to the question of estimates, the point I am trying to make is this, that under this legislation what the government asks is a blank cheque to proceed with measures for the alleviation of unemployment and agricultural distress.

Mr. McLARTY: Nothing will be spent until the estimates are passed in this house. We are not asking for a blank cheque.