

of my hon. friend (Mr. Neely), and it shows that we undoubtedly are a great deal more generous to-day than we ever thought of being when we discussed the matter in the autumn of last year. However, that is immaterial. I for one, as a western man, with my other western colleagues in the Government, have been pressing that the fullest possible relief in the power of the Government should be given to the western farmers. I think it ought to be admitted in all fairness that the statement of the Minister of the Interior makes it abundantly clear that we are endeavouring to carry out a policy which will be of great advantage to the people of western Canada and to the entire satisfaction of every reasonable-minded man in that portion of the Dominion.

Mr. D. WARNOCK (Macleod): For the past three months I have been among the farmers of Southern Alberta, meeting them individually in their homes and collectively in their association meetings, and I am in a position to give the House some first-hand information in regard to the seed grain question, especially as it affects Southern Alberta. Since the outbreak of war, the farmers have been deluged with literature and lectures, urging them to go in for increased production. There is not a farmer in Southern Alberta who does not wish to increase his production; there is not a farmer who does not realize that increased agricultural production would in this crisis be a splendid thing for the Empire, and not only for the Empire, but for Canada and the farmers themselves. It is not lectures or advice that the farmers require at this time; it is financial assistance, and the greatest problem that the farmers in the drouth-stricken district have is to find ways and means of procuring seed for this coming spring. And, Sir, notwithstanding the long explanation of the Minister of Public Works, it is very evident that some one has blundered in this matter. The indecision of those entrusted with formulating a policy of seed grain assistance has led to a great deal of disappointment and much valuable time has been wasted. As the member for Saskatoon pointed out, the price of seed grain has materially increased and is getting higher every day, and unless prompt steps are taken by the Government this grain will be at an almost prohibitory price. In October last it was understood that every farmer in the drouth-stricken area would be provided with seed grain.

There were letters written which led farmers to expect that assistance. In the month of January the deputy relief commissioner visited the farmers in my own district and led them to understand that all would be assisted, and many applications for seed grain were handed to him. A little later, the farmers were notified by letter that only those living on unpatented lands would be assisted. Here is a sample of these letters over the signature of J. Bruce Walker, Commissioner, and it is dated Winnipeg, January 25, 1915:

Re Seed Grain.

Sir,—Replying to your application for an advance of seed grain, I have to inform you that this government is only making advances of seed grain to those in your district who are on unpatented land. I note from your application that you only hold patented land and it is with regret that I have to inform you that your application cannot receive favourable consideration. You will require to look to your local municipality or to your provincial government for assistance in the matter of seed grain.

Your obedient servant,

J. Bruce Walker,
Commissioner.

The Deputy Seed Grain Commissioner had visited the district in which the gentleman who received this letter lived, and I think that district is within the prescribed area, it being in the Macleod district, which would be included in the Lethbridge land district. The Deputy Seed Grain Commissioner had visited that area in January and had received these applications, and had led the farmers of that district to expect assistance. I may say that this was not the first crop failure the farmers of that district had met with. In 1913 they suffered severely from hail, and last year their crop was almost a total failure. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that so far as I know not one farmer now asking for assistance in that district sold grain; they had no grain to sell.

As to holders of patents not receiving assistance, I would like to explain to the House that in my opinion patentees are in a worse position than homesteaders. It has been customary for homesteaders, as soon as they receive their patents, to at once apply to a loan company and borrow every dollar procurable. They do this so that they may reimburse the storekeepers and others who had carried them while they were fulfilling the homestead regulations. They also purchased horses and equipment to go on breaking more land, and so these patentees are often really in a worse position than the homesteaders who have not