

The Address—Mr. Argue

Saskatchewan minister of highways (Hon. J. T. Douglas), on April 7, 1949, the second paragraph of which reads:

It seems clear from the helpful attitude you adopted at the conference and from subsequent correspondence that you are anxious to proceed at an early date.

In my opinion that is proof positive that the Minister of Agriculture's statement at Indian Head was not based on fact. I remember during the session last fall the debate that took place in respect to irrigation. The hon. member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Thatcher) smoked out the Minister of Agriculture in a very able manner and brought to light his changed views regarding irrigation in Saskatchewan. In spite of the minister's statements over the years that irrigation projects, particularly the South Saskatchewan irrigation project, would be built by the federal government, at the session last fall he said that the federal government would go ahead with that all-important program only on condition that the government of Saskatchewan would contribute \$50 million to \$60 million over a period of years. Let me quote from the *Regina Leader-Post* of June 23, 1949, which reports a speech made by the minister at Lemberg. I quote:

"The South Saskatchewan project would provide cheap power and encourage building of industries in small towns, provide an incentive for young people to stay in this province. I think we have made a fairly good start now," said Mr. Gardiner. "Send us back to complete the job. . ."

Lo and behold, when the people of Saskatchewan, along with the people of other provinces in Canada, sent the minister and the government back to Ottawa to complete the job, one of his first announcements was that if that job was to be completed the province of Saskatchewan must raise \$50 million to \$60 million. I can well understand the minister's view at the present time with regard to irrigation. He knows that there are surpluses of agricultural products on hand which he is finding great difficulty in marketing. He knows that neither he nor the government have a policy whereby those surpluses can be marketed. So he says, "Why go ahead with an irrigation development in Saskatchewan which will make our farm surpluses even more unmanageable?"

One cabinet minister after another went before the country previous to June 27 and either made statements and promises that they have since abandoned or else failed to give the public the information it had a right to expect. I might refer to the attitude taken by the minister and the government in respect to the Prairie Farm Assistance Act, an act directed toward maintaining some income for farmers when they suffer a crop failure.

An amendment to the act was announced at the session of parliament previous to the election but we were not told what it would contain. In my constituency—I am not talking about any other constituency at this time—a number of the inspectors under the Prairie Farm Assistance Act went around saying that if the Liberal candidates were elected and the Liberal government returned the Prairie Farm Assistance Act payments would be doubled. When I took the train for Ottawa last September one of the inspectors said to me, "I suppose you will support the amendment calling for an increase in the bonus from \$2.50 to \$5 per acre?"

I know that the minister never said that the payments would be increased to \$5 per acre, but nevertheless the impression got around that they would be increased by the new amendment and the minister did not have enough courage to tell the farmers of Saskatchewan exactly what would be in that amendment if the government were returned to power. No cabinet minister I wager can dig up a quotation from any of his own speeches or those of his colleagues which would indicate in any way that if the government were returned to power and if within eight months after the election Canada had widespread unemployment the government would completely abandon its shelf of public works program. I was amazed and disheartened to hear the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) announce in his first speech of this session that the government was not prepared to undertake a comprehensive program to deal with the present serious and widespread unemployment. He said it was spotty, seasonal, regional, and that the coming of spring would take care of the situation. In the meantime, even if the Prime Minister is right—as I very much doubt—there are 375,000 unemployed in Canada who are living either on a pittance from unemployment insurance or on some form of municipal relief. If one also considers the dependents of these 375,000 unemployed, then there are a million Canadians today who have no income except a small pittance from unemployment insurance or some form of relief assistance. If any minister of the government had said in the election campaign, "If the people of Canada return us to power and if within eight months a million Canadians do not have a decent standard of living because there are not enough jobs to go around, we will do nothing," then the government of course would have been thoroughly defeated.

I could go on and quote many other instances where the government in my opinion misled the Canadian electorate before June 27. For example we have the old age pensions question before us at this time, particularly