

recently that they have not been given a square deal in the granting of leases by the timber and grazing branch, and I should be very glad indeed if the minister would undertake to have this matter straightened out.

Mr. COOTE: Can the minister tell us whether the twenty-one-year leases are being granted only in the case of leases which are expiring, or in the case of leases which have still some years to run?

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): At the moment we are considering every application that comes in to us from that particular area.

Mr. COOTE: I would suggest to the minister that to me it does not seem quite fair for the Dominion government to do that, because I understand that at the present time negotiations are being carried on with the province of Alberta, particularly, for the return of their natural resources, and one of the natural resources which would be of considerable value to them is these grazing lands.

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): They will all go over to them.

Mr. COOTE: It does seem to me that the provincial government should not be handicapped with twenty-one-year leases on so much of these leased lands in view of the fact that the natural resources may be soon returned to the provinces. Has the minister consulted the provincial government at all in that regard?

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): Yes, with both governments, and I did receive a letter from the Minister of Agriculture in Alberta suggesting that in view of the fact that the natural resources might be returned to them, while he had no objection to twenty-one-year leases, he voiced the opinion that perhaps it would be well to delay in this matter, but inasmuch as no particular objection was taken to the granting of twenty-one-year leases, and as the stock men in Saskatchewan were being granted this privilege by the Saskatchewan government, I felt that it was unfair to hold up these ranchers in Alberta, who are all in one organization, and I am therefore issuing the twenty-one-year leases. I frankly confess I had no opposition to this idea except for the statement I have mentioned, that in view of the fact that at some early date the natural resources might be turned over to the provinces, it might be well to delay in this matter.

Mr. COOTE: The minister does not feel that the ranchers would be held up at all if

[Mr. McTaggart.]

they were given ten-year leases, as has been done in the past?

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): I think I am safe in saying, and I think my hon. friend will agree with me, that cattle raising in western Canada is in a pretty critical condition to-day, and has been for some time, and unless some relief is given to our cattle raisers in Alberta and Saskatchewan, in the southern areas of those provinces, there is going to be a large number of failures among them. That was my reason for granting these leases, in order that if at all possible we might save that industry, because it is a very important industry throughout that area.

Mr. KENNEDY (Edmonton): Would the minister apply the same policy to northern Alberta?

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): That is vastly different. In most cases where there are ranchers in northern Alberta, perhaps a demand may be made in the very near future for those lands for agricultural purposes, but that is not the case in the southern portion of the province. I am prepared to take full responsibility, after some years of experience, and realizing the critical situation in which the stock raisers find themselves, for the increased tenure in these leases. I think it will result in a very great advantage to the cattle raisers.

Mr. COOTE: The only reason I mention it is that it does seem to me, in view of the possibility of the natural resources being turned over to the provinces at an early date, the ranchers would not have been left very long in suspense if it had been left for the province to deal with. I think it should have been left to the provinces to decide. I hope the Minister of the Interior will advise the Minister of Agriculture of the severe straits in which the cattle men of western Canada are to-day. I agree with what the Minister of the Interior says about their position.

Can the minister tell the committee what area of these lands are under lease in Alberta and Saskatchewan, and what is the annual rental collected?

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): Grazing leases?

Mr. COOTE: Yes.

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): I do not know that I could give that in detail, but in the particular area in which the leases are to be issued I felt there should be a promise that these leases would be continued when the natural resources were turned over, because